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# AT ONE WITH THE INVISIBLE

*Studies in Mysticism*

EDITED BY

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# EDITOR'S PREFACE

This book is the outgrowth of a seminar in Mysticism recently conducted by the writer in Yale University. There is, as Professor James suggests, an element of mysticism in all religion, and the aim of the seminar was to study its various aspects in the religious experience and teachings of those in whom it was conspicuous. All of the contributors to this volume, save one, took part in the seminar, and the writer desires to acknowledge again their kindness in rendering such valuable service and in permitting further use of their material in this way. It seemed advisable that a larger audience should share in the benefits of it — hence this publication. Besides serving as an introduction to the study of Mysticism, the papers will prove especially serviceable to students of the Psychology of Religion.

E. Hershey Sneath.

Yale University,
June 26, 1920.

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# AT ONE WITH THE INVISIBLE

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## THE MYSTICISM OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS

FRANK CHAMBERLIN PORTER

The Old Testament Prophets have been understood by Christian people generally as foretellers of Jesus Christ and of various details of his earthly life, death and resurrection. This use and understanding of them has caused neglect of their message for their own age and people, of their close relation to the events and conditions of their time, and of their real significance as discovering, or one may say, creative, minds in the history of the religious progress and achievement of mankind. It has also prevented the effort to understand the inner experiences of the prophets; since if the prophets really wrote of a person or of events centuries in the future, it could only be assumed that they themselves did not know the real meaning of their writing, but were passive human instruments through whom God spoke and wrote. This way of regarding them may, no doubt, at first seem to exalt and honor them, forbidding their classification with other men. The idea that we can understand the human nature of their experience is excluded by the theory; still more absolutely forbidden is all thought of our learning from their example the real nature of religion, and following them in their inner life with God. In this sense we are not and cannot be prophets. This conception of prophecy was, in fact, a Christian inheritance from Jewish and more especially from Hellenistic Jewish interpretations.

The theory of the passiveness of the prophets as the voice or the pen of the Spirit of God was, in fact, more Greek than Hebrew.

Two movements of thought in modern times have changed all this and made such an understanding of the prophets unnatural to us: first, the historical method and spirit of research; and then, more recently, the psychological analysis of religious experience.

Historical science has changed the prophets from what Coleridge called " Super-human Ventriloquists " to most living personalities, who have a greatness of their own, and each his own quality of greatness, and who stand almost highest among the path-makers in the history of the religious and ethical advance of man. It has had this effect by concentrating our attention first upon the work of the prophets in and for their own times; and yet their abiding significance and the permanent factors in their teaching have come into clearer light by this emphasis on their relation to these long past situations and events.

The comparative study of religions, the last path of historical study to be opened up, tends still further to lessen the isolation and peculiarity of the religion of Israel. It is true that the prophets remain the fact most without parallel in other religions. But comparative studies have tended toward denying uniqueness where it seemed greatest, in ecstasy and vision and in prediction, and bringing uniqueness to light in what seems to us natural, the ethical interpretation of the character and demands of God. It is also true that the significance of the prophets as those who really opened the path toward Christ and Christianity is increased, not lessened, by an historical interpretation which gives them a real place and a great part in the developing life of the human spirit. We now see that the prophets actually achieved, all together, yet each in lines of his own, the truths about God and the experiences of the life of man

with God and toward man which were brought to their unity and culmination in the teachings and life of Christ. Historical studies have thus re-discovered the prophets, released them from the obscurity and isolation in which the old theory necessarily held them, and revealed them as great struggling and achieving human beings.

But now comes a new method of scientific study that claims its rights in the sphere of religion, past as well as present; and it is not at first so evident that this also will prove a gain, rather than a loss, to religious faith and life. Psychology undertakes to explain the nature of the religious experiences of great as well as average people; and there are many who fear that its tendency is toward reducing the great to the level of the lowly, if not reducing religious experience in general to inward processes which do not require the assumption of the reality of another world than the natural, or another person than the human. Our present study of the mysticism of the prophets must take its start from the findings of history, but must then attempt to understand the nature of their inner life and their special experience of God in the spirit of this newer science.

Prophecy in Israel is of three kinds, or presents three distinct aspects, which are also three successive stages of development, though there is over-lapping and some movement back and forth between them.

Prophets first meet us as bands of dancing dervishes, inducing ecstatic conditions by music and dancing, and creating a contagious atmosphere of excitement, which draws such outsiders as Saul under its spell (I Sam. 10: 5-13, 19: 20-24). Their emotions very likely found expression in unintelligible outcries of the sort that Paul describes in I Corinthians 12 and 14 as "speaking with tongues." We get the impression that the ecstatic condition itself was the thing cultivated and valued. The revelation was the fact that men could thus become possessed by a divine spirit. Their

appearance and actions were evidence of the reality of the unseen world. The loud cries and dances and knife-cuttings ascribed in I Kings 18 to the prophets of Baal are of the same sort; and it is not unlikely that the "*nebiim*" came into Israel from the Canaanitish religion. They are distinguished from the seers, whom we infer unveiled future or hidden things through a magic science or art, by the use of some ritual, by the observation of the starry heavens, or by some other means. The prophets became recognized and honored in Israel, but all sorts of magic and divination were denounced by the prophets themselves and prohibited by the law. They were no doubt thought to involve the recognition of other divine powers besides Yahweh. The *nebiim* seem never to have used physical means, but to have depended upon the ecstatic frenzy which they cultivated, and to have acted and spoken as impelled by this sacred madness. Their utterances did not remain always unintelligible. Balaam is a type of the prophet whose inspiration is of the ecstatic type (Num. 24: 2–4, 15), a heathen prophet, who utters against his will oracles dictated by Israel's God, and containing the praises of Israel and promises of its coming greatness. He is a passive instrument through which God announces his great historic plan. The four hundred prophets who advised Ahab to engage in the battle in which he fell (I Kings 22), and the prediction by Hananiah of an early return within two years of the exiles of 597 B. C. (Jeremiah 28), indicate that the majority of the prophets were patriots in their inspiration, and were inclined to foretell what the king and the people desired. Ahab's prophets were really inspired by Yahweh, but were inspired to prophesy falsely; a secret which only one prophet, Micaiah, knew.

He was an early forerunner of the second and greatest class of Israel's prophets, whom it is the special task of this discussion to understand. Their message contradicted the popular desires, and was opposed by the great majority of

prophets, as well as by the priests and kings, but was vindicated by the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B. C., and of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B. C. Their message and the nature of their inspiration stand in striking contrast to those who preceded them; but we shall do better to return to them after looking briefly at their successors, with whom their contrast is almost as striking.

The third sort of prophecy belongs after the Exile and comes out in its true character only in the apocalypses; but the transition to them is made through Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel, and other late parts of the prophetic canon. The first apocalypse in the full sense, and the only one in the canon, is Daniel. Others follow during a period of two centuries or more, from Daniel's time, that of the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV (about 165 B. C.), to the fall of Jerusalem (70 A. D.) and the final end of the Jewish state (135 A. D.). Here we have writers who are writers only, not speakers nor actors, not at all in the public eye, their personalities wholly concealed behind the assumed names of ancient men of God. This third stage and type of prophecy in Israel has something in common with the first; for the apocalyptists also value and cultivate ecstatic experiences, though rather as a condition of vision than as a physical excitement which has its value in itself. Vision is the uniform method in which apocalyptic revelations are given. The method corresponds to the contents, for the apocalypse is a " revelation " of mysteries of the unseen world and of the future. The language in which such themes are treated is almost of necessity that of mysterious imagery. The pseudepigraphic form is usual in all apocalyptic writing.

In regard to the nature of the experiences that underlie such writings there can hardly be much more doubt or difficulty than in the case of the frenzied ecstasies of the earlier period. We have no need to assume any but physiological and psychic causes of the transports of the early prophets,

whether of Baal or of Yahweh. Parallels are at hand among all nations and in all ages, even down to the present. Such phenomena are to us so far from being proofs of the reality of God and spiritual things, that they sometimes tempt one to wonder whether all other supposed evidences of contact with the Other-than-ourselves may not like them be self-induced delusions. The apocalypses certainly do not help us to lay such ghosts of doubt. Many reasons combine to warn us that the visions of these seers are not real sights of the unseen universe, nor real liftings of the veil that hides the future. The element of falsity in the assumption of the character of a great man of the past puts us on our guard; and the character and varied contents of the visions themselves make the assumption of their objectivity impossible. This does not mean that the earliest bands of prophets were not often really beside themselves, nor that the apocalyptic seers may not sometimes really have experienced the trance conditions which they coveted and sought to induce by fastings and by mental concentration and eager expectation. We get the impression, however, that vision has become a literary form among writers of this sort, and it is seldom that we are led to assume that the vision is real in this psychological sense. Perhaps the most convincing instances are such as Daniel 10: 1–9, and II Esdras 5: 14–22, 9: 23–28, etc.

In part corresponding to these three stages and kinds of prophets are three sorts of records which we have of them. About prophets of the first kind we have only popular traditions, stories embodied in the historical books, which enable us to understand what other people thought about the prophets rather than what the prophets thought about themselves. The tendency in these stories is toward an exaggeration of the peculiarity of the prophet and of his miraculous powers. Even so strong and great a character as Elijah is lowered in the very effort of story to exalt him,

and tends to become a mere miracle-worker. Fortunately the memory of his personality restrains this effort in some measure; yet it is quite impossible to unravel the strands of the narrative and recover the original facts of his prophetic experiences, and his own understanding of the nature of his relations with God. Of course the ordinary prophets would have shared the popular view of their calling, and sometimes sincerely, sometimes in pretense, would have cultivated ecstatic conditions and undertaken miracle and prediction. The records we have give the distinct impression that most of them were physically and psychically different from other men, but ethically and intellectually quite on the average level. And this judgment, as we shall see, is confirmed by the criticism passed upon them by the great prophets who follow.

These great prophets are often called writing prophets, although they speak first and only write afterwards, or are written about by their disciples. We cannot accept the books that now bear their names as directly the work of their pens. The analysis of these books and the recovery of the original oracles of these men is so difficult that the doubt is not unnatural whether even in their cases we can get into immediate contact with their minds. But the results of historical and literary study are most reassuring. In spite of differences in detail, agreement in all essentials has been reached, and the personalities of Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, now stand out with wonderful distinctness and impressiveness. It is most instructive to compare the Isaiah of II Kings with the Isaiah of the undoubtedly original oracles contained in the book that has his name. We should know some of the great events of Isaiah's life if we had only the stories of Kings, but Isaiah himself, all that was most characteristic in his religious experience and faith, and that which he contributed to the spiritual progress of the race, would be wholly unknown. It is not

always the writers by profession whom we know best. We know Isaiah, although his book is composite and analysis is difficult, far better than we know the author of Isaiah 40–66, even if we accept these chapters as a unity and as directly from their author's hand. We know Paul so well because he is more than a writer, in fact, only incidentally a writer, his letters being part of his missionary activity. We know Jesus himself as a living personality far better than we know the writer of Hebrews or even the author of the Johannine literature, although we have Jesus' words only in translation, and in varying forms in the different gospels.

The prophets of the third sort were writers only. We have their books on the whole as they put them forth. And yet, there is almost as thick a veil between the records and the facts in their cases as in those of the first order of prophets who did not write at all, but were written about in popular legend. We need almost as much caution in the use of the book of Enoch or the apocalypses of Ezra or Baruch as in the stories of Samuel and Kings when we are seeking the actual facts of prophetic experience. Vision has become for the writers of the apocalypses a convention, a literary device shaped in form and determined in contents by traditions, written or oral. It happens, therefore, not by accident that we know the prophets of the second kind better even than those of the last period. They stand out distinctly because they spoke in public and on public matters, because they were great actors in great crises of the nation's life, because their words even when written have the character of spoken words, the immediateness and sincerity and self-revealing quality which words artfully put together in the study, and especially words written in an assumed character and in a professional spirit, could not have.

Of course our better knowledge of the prophets of the

second kind is really due to the fact that they were far greater men than those who preceded and those who followed them in Israel. This is the reason why they occupy a greater place in the history of their nation and why the account of their religious experiences is truer to fact and fuller in meaning. The work they did, the purposes they had, the truths they saw and spoke, have an importance that itself guards the genuineness of the utterance and of its record. It is no mere accident, even though it does not always happen, that we have in these cases the best records of the greatest men, the best knowledge of the experiences that are best worth knowing.

It is already evident how different will be the problems and the results of the psychological study of the mystical experiences of prophets of these three kinds. In the crude prophecy of Saul's time and of the period of the early kings we have men acting in ways that seem to others superhuman, and no doubt meant in most cases to themselves their actual possession by superhuman spirits. But this sort of religious frenzy or madness gives the least difficulty to the psychologist and is most easily accounted for. It is the operation of factors in our mental and emotional experience with which we are familiar, abnormal but not supernormal functionings of the mind, below rather than above the common levels of human experience. In these cases to explain is to explain away, to understand is to be free from the desire and therefore to lose the capacity to have such experiences. When men are convinced that these experiences are manifestations of weaknesses of the human, rather than powers of the divine, and that they have no validity as proof of the reality of the higher realm of being, and are of no effect in opening avenues for the incoming of higher powers into human life, then they are no longer experienced. The miracle stories that are told in these early prophets fall away of themselves when science removes the

mystery and disproves the magic which ignorant hopes and fears created. In all this inevitable and welcome process of liberation from superstition we recognize already a very close relationship between the question of cause and the question of value. What these fanatics did and said in their frenzies, and what their later and even present ignorant imitators do and say, is without value; it calls forth no wonder in us and reveals nothing about the nature of that unseen world toward which our spirits aspire, to know and to experience which is the aim of religion.

But the third type of prophecy has a curious likeness to the first in this matter of value and truth. The apocalyptic writers uniformly claim to tell of things beyond human sight, things seen and heard and imparted only by the exceptional seer to whom such transports are granted. The modern student does not question first the genuineness of the transports, but first the truth and value of the things seen and heard. The value is, no doubt, greater than that of the physical excitement of early bands of raving dervishes, but it is not so great as it claims to be. What these visions actually contain is not information of a sort that convinces us, or that is difficult to account for as a wholly human product. The imagery used in descriptions of heaven, the throne of God, angels, the coming day of the Lord, the end of the world, and the world to come, we can in part trace to its sources in ancient literature, in primitive myth, in natural phenomena, especially those of the visible heavens, in catastrophies and disasters, wars and exiles, the doings of cruel and ambitious tyrants, and the shiftings of world-empire. Some great ideas, especially such as may deserve to be called a philosophy of history, or rather, the doctrine of an all-determining plan of God, we may find in these books, and some worthy discussions of the great problems of sin and evil; but of an actual seeing of realms and beings beyond our sense we find nothing, nor any justification of the claim

to cast a ray of light into the darkness of the future. And by this lack of value in the contents of such prophecy our impression is confirmed that the experiences by which it comes are not other than human.

What now of the prophets of the second period, and especially what can we know as to the nature of their mystical experiences? In their cases also we must necessarily judge of the experience by its results, of the inspiration by the things revealed and achieved. Let us then ask two questions in regard to these great men. First, what do we find their real message to be? what truth from God do they declare? what work of God do they accomplish? The answer to such questions will be fundamental in our decision as to the nature of their experience. And in the second place, what do the prophets themselves say of their experiences or reveal indirectly concerning them?

The very fact that these prophets put their spoken oracles into writing indicates that they put emphasis upon the contents of their preaching and not chiefly on the mysteriousness of its form. These are, above all things, prophets who have something to say, and something to accomplish by what they say; and we shall understand their mental life best if we understand the meaning and purpose of their mission. Tolstoy gives a striking definition of the characteristics of prophecy when he writes that, "First, it runs counter to the general disposition of the people among whom it makes itself heard; secondly, those who hear it feel its truth, they know not why; thirdly, and chiefly, it moves men to the realization of what it foretells." These characteristics do, in fact, describe the prophets before us accurately. Their message was new, in the sense that it was against current opinion and practice in matters of religion. Yet it was convincing because it made its appeal to something deeper in men's consciousness than the popular and superficial currents of thought and conduct, and even to some-

thing older and more fundamental in the religious traditions of Israel. And their words had effect, not only in demonstrating, but in bringing to realization, that which they declared to be the will and purpose of God.

The teaching of these prophets is closely bound up with the critical and stirring events of the period between 760 and 586 B. C., the period of the aggressions of the Assyrian empire and of its decline and fall, and the succession of Babylon to dominance over the world. Put in concrete form what the prophets of this period had to say was first, that a crisis was at hand which would prove to be disaster and destruction to Israel itself, and that at the hand of Israel's own God. The Day of Yahweh was at hand and would prove to be not the day of Israel's success and power, but of its overthrow, a day, not of light, but of darkness, not of escape from danger, but of the coming of greater and unescapable dangers (Amos 5: 18–20). In the second place, the popular religion, as it was practiced at the various shrines throughout the land and as it was ordered and conducted by the priesthood, was declared by the prophets to be idolatrous and heathenish, not commanded by Yahweh but displeasing to him, a contradiction of that sole worship which he demanded of his people. In place of this, the religion which Yahweh required was, in Micah's great phrases, only "to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." In the third place, politics and war were not the means by which Israel was to further its fortunes, to escape evil, or to fulfill its calling as the people of Yahweh. The kingdom itself seems to have been regarded, certainly by Hosea, as apostasy from God. Isaiah opposes the alliance with Egypt, which was the nation's best hope of resistance against Assyria, and demands a waiting upon God in humility and trust, and a sense that he only is to be feared, and that the nation's security rests solely on its attitude toward him.

Behind these concrete and definite declarations were certain underlying principles: above all, that Yahweh is righteous and that this righteous God orders the history of the world in accordance with his will, not only interpreting events as they happen, but himself determining events in accordance with righteousness and for its ends. Matthew Arnold rightly interprets the spirit of prophecy when he makes the central message of the Old Testament the faith that the power not ourselves makes for righteousness, and that to righteousness belongs blessedness. To this it should be added that the righteousness of God now required him to intervene in the course of history; that this intervention must be against and not for his own people, Israel; and that this something which God is about to do, this strange and incredible turning of his wrath from Israel's enemies against Israel itself, is known to his prophets, though it should be known to all men by the course of events and by the ill desert and chiding conscience of the people. Another underlying principle of the prophets' teaching is involved in this. The God of righteousness is the God of all nations, the orderer of human history; and this means in effect that there is no other God. An implicit even though not at first unmistakably expressed monotheism underlies the religion of the prophets. Indeed, it is not too much to say that we owe our monotheistic faith to them. That the one God in whom we believe is an ethical personality, is Israel's great gift to the world, and the prophets' great and at first most unwelcome gift to Israel. One other fundamental principle of prophecy is the blending of morals and religion, the substitution of righteousness and judgment, the knowledge of God and kindness, humility and faith, inwardness and the communion of the soul with God, for sacrifices and festivals. This is another way of putting that achievement of prophecy for which the debt of the world to the prophets is great beyond reckoning.

In all this nothing has been said of a prediction by these prophets of a Messianic future for Israel, or of a happy consummation of the history of the world. As a matter of fact that which these prophets are at one in foretelling is judgment, not deliverance. That good must prevail in the end is of course involved in their belief that Yahweh is the God of righteousness, and that he is the God of human history. But the hopes that Israel had set on his coming intervention, hopes of national greatness and even primacy among the nations of the world, were denied, not affirmed, by these prophets, who were therefore, in this sense critics, not creators, of the Messianic hope. Of this something more will be said later on.

From the summary we have thus far made it will not seem strange that different definitions have been possible of what constitutes the most distinctive message of the prophets. Some still say prediction, but the prediction of disaster. Some say that a belief in an all inclusive plan of God and in his revelation of this to the prophets, God's foretelling through them of the things which he is about to do, constitutes their distinctive teaching. Again it is possible to say that the righteousness of Yahweh is their characteristic doctrine, upon which everything turns; and that this moral conception of the character of God explains their criticism of national and ceremonial religion alike, and involves as its inevitable outcome that peculiar type of ethical monotheism which it is Israel's glory to have achieved. After all, these various definitions are not inconsistent. The important thing for our present purpose is to have it clearly in mind that ethical and spiritual religion was the concern of these prophets, and that to this all details as to the manner of their inspiration and everything external, whether in their experience or in their forecasts, were subjected.

It must already be evident that the sort of truth which a prophet has to impart will necessarily affect the manner

in which he receives it and in which he expresses it. We should not expect vision to have an important place in conveying the conviction that Yahweh is righteous and that he demands righteousness of men. These are not things that can be seen with the eye. God himself is the fact that the prophets know, and they know him not as a thing, but as a person, so that the question as to the nature of their inspiration becomes a question of the sort of experience by which men become assured of the reality of this divine moral personality and have a vivid sense of his glory and power and a deep enthusiasm and courageous loyalty toward him. It has been said that the poetic monologues of Jeremiah are the highest point in the development of prophecy, its "most exalted literary creation." But the monologues of Jeremiah reveal a great personality in intimate conversation with the supreme personality; and their effect is to help us to know God through our knowing the prophet himself. In fact the best final summary of the message of the prophets would be to say that they are themselves their message. They are great, distinctive, living persons, in whose spirit, even more than in their words, we see and feel the presence of God.

Let us turn, now, from the message of the prophets to their own account of their prophetic experiences. They are still prophets, *nebiim,* and no one thinks of calling them by any other name, in spite of the difference that separates them from others before and about and after them. There is, indeed, in their accounts of their call and of other crises in their lives, and sometimes in their manner and actions, enough that reminds us of the prophets of popular story and of the later apocalyptic seers. So that there are two quite different ways in which modern writers characterize them, some emphasizing their likeness to others of their order, and some setting them apart, as ethical teachers and

the founders of spiritual religion. It would be a mistake to suppose that they are not men of their times, and that they anticipate modern science in its interpretation of trance and vision, and in its rationalizing of man's experience of the Divine. Nevertheless it is evident that these men were fully conscious of the contrast between them and other prophets. Amos refuses to class himself with the professional prophets of his time, although he has no other word to substitute when he describes his own office and function (7: 14–15, 3: 8). The difference is evident enough, both as to their message and as to the nature of their experience. The popular prophets preach peace and prosperity for their nation, while these prophets announce woes. The ethical condition upon which alone the great prophets rest their hope of good was lacking in the case of the others; and with this difference belongs naturally the consequence that while ecstasy, vision, and miracle are primary marks of the professional prophet, these are altogether in the background, and in some cases entirely lacking, in the case of the men we are considering.

Let us see, briefly, how this is in the case of the individual prophets of this higher order. Amos says nothing about his calling except that God took him from his flock and said to him, " Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." The visions narrated in chapters 7 and 8 do not suggest trance or anything abnormal, but are interpretations, as if in parable, of things actually happening before the prophet's eye. A plague of locusts, a drought, a builder's plumbline, a basket of summer fruit, are enough as points of contact for the prophet's thought and for its effective utterance. The appeal of Amos throughout is to the common conscience of man; and in one striking though difficult passage he seems to say that when conditions and events are what they then were, every one ought to hear the word of Yahweh and to prophesy (3: 8). That which seems most extraordinary in

the message of Amos is his confident announcement that it is Yahweh's purpose to bring a destructive and final judgment upon his own people. Such a possibility had never been imagined before; and the incalculable importance of the prophet's foresight of the coming fall of the nation, and his interpretation of it as Yahweh's own deed, for the whole future development of religion, makes even the most modern and scientific student of the prophets wonder whether something more than observation and inference lies behind it. Amos gives us no help in answering the question whence this assurance came to him. We can see that it was in part a statesman's insight into the inevitable results of Assyria's encroachments and of the resistance of small nations. We can see, also, that the prophet's soul was filled with indignation at the religious practices and ideas of the people, and at their contradiction in conduct of everything that was demanded by the righteousness of God. Whether the unshaken certainty that disaster was at hand came upon him as a mysterious foreboding or presentment in some sudden moment of intense emotional experience, or grew more gradually within him, we have no means of deciding. What we know is that in inseparable connection with his conviction that the Day of Yahweh would be a day of darkness to Israel stand his two great denials of the religious faith of his people: his denial that sacrifice and festival are pleasing to God, and his denial that Yahweh cares for Israel more than for Israel's enemies, or will deal with them on any different terms (5:21–25, 9:7). Here, then, is one of the greatest of the prophets, the first to take the most radical positions in reversal of the popular religion, whose experiences involve nothing mystical in the sense that ecstatic or visionary crises have a place in them, and who impresses one much more as a man whose ethical and rational judgments are expressions of his own nature, and are to him only what every man should recognize for himself as true.

The professional prophets were claiming supernatural gifts, but Amos makes his appeal to common sense, to reason, to conscience, and in and with these to the character of Yahweh, as all his people ought to know it.

Hosea, the younger contemporary of Amos, is like him in his message, though as different from him in his nature as two men could well be. Behind the obscure allusions of his first chapters we seem to have an account of Hosea's call to be a prophet and of the source of what was new in his message. If we can truly recover his experience it would seem that vision had even less place in it than in that of Amos, perhaps, indeed, no place at all, and that it was in a thoroughly human experience that he learned that love in God as in man can persist in spite of unworthiness, and will prove itself, even though severe in discipline, in the end redeeming in its effect. To Hosea Yahweh's purpose to destroy Israel is not the denial but the expression of his love, and is meant to result, and must in the end result, in the recovery of the nation to worthiness and fidelity in a new marriage covenant with him. Here everything lies in the region of the human, and God is discovered and understood in the light of what is deepest and highest in human nature. Passion does belong to Hosea in abundant measure. Indeed, without passion no one would be called a prophet. But of exceptional sights and hearings we read nothing. The prophet seems to be always himself; and when most himself, nearest to God. This, of course, means that the word of Yahweh to Hosea in regard to his marriage (1 : 2, 3 : 1), is the prophet's later interpretation of his painful and yet revealing experiences as being from the first the purpose of God. This is far more likely than that the prophet in an ecstatic condition actually heard these strange and cruel demands.

The case of Isaiah is different. His account of his call, in chapter 6, is beyond doubt an account of a real vision

experience, and it is very much to our present purpose to understand its nature. The prophet was no doubt in the temple when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. In the details of the vision which follow one recognizes in the background the phenomena of storm, but also the influence of imagery derived from some ancient mythological tradition. The seraphim may have been personifications of lightning, though hardly so in Isaiah's thought. They are here for the sake of what they say, "Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory"; and for what they do, since it is one of them who touches the prophet's lips with a coal from the altar and takes away his iniquity. The vision is remarkable for its contents of thought and feeling, rather than for its outward details. It is a vision of the holiness of God. Holiness, especially in connection with the temple and its cultus, meant to the people not sinlessness, but unapproachableness, transcendence, or, one might say, divinity, in contrast to everything human and earthly. Isaiah seems to have been the first clearly to realize that the holiness of God meant not merely his contrast to man's weakness and mortality, but especially his separateness from man's sin; for it is unclean lips of which the prophet is immediately conscious, wrong thoughts and words, and that not only in Israel, but in himself. He is the first prophet whose call comes with the consciousness of his own sin and the experience of forgiveness. The right response of man to the holiness of God is humility. "Woe is me! for I am undone." Amos says in effect, "Ye shall be righteous, for Yahweh is righteous"; Hosea, "Ye shall be loving, for Yahweh is loving." Isaiah does not make Yahweh say, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy"; and when this is finally said (Lev. 19:2) it does not mean the imitation of God. Holiness was never the quality in God which man could imitate, but precisely that which distinguished God from man. So

even although Isaiah sees that the holiness of God is a spiritual rather than a physical transcendence, it still means transcendence and not likeness to man. To the holiness of God man's natural response is fear. So it was at first with Isaiah. But what followed was the truly epoch-making discovery that the holiness of God is itself purifying and redemptive, not destructive, toward the man who responds to it with humility and the confession of sin. It is one of the seraphim who voiced the holiness of God, that touches the prophet's lips; and it is the fire itself, emblem of the holiness of God, which purges his sin. Then follows,— not as a hard duty, but as an eager, grateful response to the voice, "Whom shall I send?"— obedience. "Here am I; send me." The order of this religious experience is not that of later Jewish legalism; it is exactly that of the Christianity of Paul. We have, then, here a vision which seems beyond doubt to have come in a highly wrought crisis of emotional experience, and may well have involved the actual loss of the consciousness of what stood before the physical senses, but of which the significance lies not at all in its objectivity as vision, but in the most inward and exalted regions of the spiritual life. From this time on Isaiah is wholly dominated by the sense of God, the certainty that the holy and spiritual One, unseen by the eye, his presence unfelt because of the dullness of men's minds, is the only reality with which man has to reckon, the only one to be feared, the only one to be trusted. Another word, not used in the account of the vision, but involved in it, expresses the essential nature of Isaiah's religion, the word "faith" (7:9, 28:16). The pride that belongs to men who have no sense of God, the self-trust and confidence in the human and the material that belongs to this dullness and insensibility, are the sins that are to bring disaster upon Israel; and these disasters which humble man will only exalt Yahweh and manifest his holiness.

It is no doubt quite natural that a prophet who has this conception of God and this experience of religion should have psychic experiences of an unusual kind. Both Amos and Hosea derive their conception of God from their own human character and experience. Their conception of God is ethical and personal. No vision need disclose these qualities. The man who has them by nature, or who gains them through experience, needs only to look inward, to understand himself, in order to know God. Isaiah accepts the ethical God of Amos and Hosea. "Yahweh of Hosts is exalted in judgment, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness" (5: 16). But it is God's exaltation, his holiness, his contrast to man, that dominates Isaiah's religion. He may almost be said to have rescued from the temple cultus, which Amos and Hosea denounced, the spiritual truth which underlay it; yet his denunciation of ritual religion as the people practiced it was quite as vehement and absolute as theirs (1: 10–17).

There are some other evidences that Isaiah was a prophet of the ecstatic type, very much in the same sense in which that can be said of the apostle Paul. He is compelled by a pressure which he cannot resist to take a position in national crises contrary to that which others took, and which events seemed to demand. "Yahweh spake thus to me, with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A conspiracy, concerning all whereof this people shall say, A conspiracy; neither fear ye their fear nor be in dread. Yahweh of Hosts . . . let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (8: 11–13). It may not be necessary to assume actual trance in order to account for this, yet there is certainly here described an experience of supernatural power to which the prophet submits in spite of himself. The hand of Yahweh did not rob him of consciousness, but did take away his freedom. A strange passage, 28: 9–13, seems to mean that

Isaiah was taunted by his opponents as one who utters senseless baby-talk. His answer is the threat that they will soon hear words that they cannot understand, namely the words of the Assyrian invader. We may well suppose that as Paul declared that he spoke with tongues more than they all, so Isaiah's intense emotions may sometimes have led him to unintelligible utterances; although it is as true of him as of Paul that reason and conscience dominated and almost always made emotion their powerful servant. This impression is strengthened by such strange actions as are ascribed to him in chapter 20. That which Isaiah saw in his vision he wished all men to see and believed that all men should see. The dullness of men to the reality of God was their sin, and the safety and strength that belonged to quietness and trust are offered freely to every one.

The question of prediction in Isaiah's preaching is involved in difficulties such as must prevent any proper discussion of it here. What we know is that Isaiah foretold the Day of Yahweh as a day of judgment upon Israel, and the coming of the Assyrians as the means by which this judgment would be executed. If he foretold the escape of Jerusalem when it was besieged by Sennacherib's army, then we should have here a striking instance of foresight or premonition as to a concrete event. There are many reasons for doubting whether tradition is correct at this point. It is, on the whole, more probable that the event produced the prediction. There are many and deep-lying difficulties in the way of supposing that Isaiah is responsible for the later dogma of the inviolable safety of Jerusalem, which it was Jeremiah's chief task to deny.

Jeremiah is the prophet about whose inner life we know most, and we may also fairly claim that he is the greatest of all. He is certainly the most human, and his prophetic experiences are most emphatically experiences of the inner life. His calling is told in the first chapter, and gives us

the impression of an absolute assurance that God has made him what he is, put his words in his mouth, made him an iron pillar and brazen wall against the land and people, but that this calling and equipment came neither at a given moment nor by any outward experience, but belonged to his underlying self-consciousness, and seemed to have belonged to him from birth. Even before birth Yahweh knew him and appointed him a prophet. The visions that are given in this chapter did not make him a prophet. They are, in fact, like the visions of Amos, mere points of connection in objects that happen to come before his eyes, with which, by a play on words or a simple symbolism, he connects his expectation of judgment. It has been truly remarked that in Jeremiah prayer takes the place of vision as the means and manner of his contact with God. Of these prayers, the poetic monologues already alluded to, one is especially enlightening in regard to his religious and prophetic consciousness. In chapter 15, verses 15–21, the prophet refers to his first finding of the words of Yahweh, to his joy in them, and then the loneliness and perpetual pain which their utterance brought him. He complains of this to God, and even expresses his fear lest Yahweh has deceived and deserted him. To these doubts Yahweh replies, demanding that he take back the unworthy things he has said, and promises that he will then again make him a brazen wall against which the people will fight but not prevail. That the experience of his prophetic call is repeated a second time in an inner conversation and debate with God is very significant as to the original nature of that experience. It is true that Jeremiah's sense of being under the pressure of a divine compulsion is not less strong than that of Isaiah. There is a striking and powerful expression of this in 20: 7–11. "Yahweh, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. For

as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and spoil: because the word of Yahweh is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forebearing, and I cannot contain." This is a first hand outpouring of a great prophetic consciousness which needs no comment. The humanity and the divine impulsion and authority of the true prophet are here completely and inseparably blended.

The mysticism of Jeremiah stands in a peculiarly illuminating relation to the legalism of Josiah's reformation, that is, to the law book of Deuteronomy. The relation of Jeremiah to this book, discovered and put into effect only a few years after the beginning of his prophesying, is another problem too complicated for us to enter upon. It seems probable that the hopes with which Jeremiah may first have greeted the appearance of this prophetic reformation of the popular religion were disappointed in the outcome. Certainly the religion he taught and the hopes he cherished were of different and even opposite nature and tendency. Against the exaltation of the temple at Jerusalem Jeremiah declared that it was God's purpose to destroy it, even as he had the sanctuary in Shiloh. Those who were proclaiming " The temple of Yahweh " as a ground of trust and as a shield of sin, were uttering lying words. The popular proverb, " We are wise, and the law of Yahweh is with us," is met by the assertion that " the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely. The wise men . . . have rejected the word of Yahweh." The sacrificial system, he affirms, does not go back to Moses and the wilderness. In general, the reformation seems to be condemned as undertaken feignedly, and not with the whole heart. The prophet's own idea of religion is given in his great description of the new covenant, when the law of Yahweh will be written in the

heart and every man will have his own knowledge of Yahweh, from the least to the greatest, needing no teacher, nor any priest, since sin will be remembered no more. To Jeremiah, also, therefore, the experience of the prophet should be the experience of every man. If it is now exceptional, it is, nevertheless, in its nature not unhuman but normal and destined to universality. On the contrary, the religion of a written canonical law, which claims finality, as Deuteronomy did (12:32), and unqualified and perpetual obedience, necessarily fears and must undertake to repress or control the words of prophets. So, in fact, the Book of Deuteronomy does. Prophets may do miracles and their predictions may prove true, yet if their teaching goes contrary to the doctrine or precepts of the law they must be rejected, and even put to death (13:1–5). Prophets are, indeed, to arise to whom the people must listen, but they are to be prophets like Moses, prophets who speak the things commanded. In fact, under a religion of the law, there can be no prophet like Moses, "whom Yahweh knew, face to face" (34:10). It is evident how effectually such principles as these would discourage and quench the spirit of prophecy. It was, indeed, precisely the currency of such principles that made Jeremiah feared and hated, and his life one perpetual martyrdom.

Jeremiah discusses in some detail the character of the prophets whom he judges false. Among them Hananiah stands out conspicuously, who predicted that the exiles of 597 would return within two years (chapter 28). This prophecy of peace is the very essence of false prophecy, as Jeremiah views it (28:7–9). He does not judge that these prophets have been misled by a deceiving spirit from Yahweh, as Micaiah judged concerning the four hundred prophets of Ahab; he declares, on the contrary, that they are conscious deceivers, speaking a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Yahweh; saying, I have dreamed,

and prophesying lies; but the word of Yahweh which is like fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, they do not possess (23: 9 ff.).

As to prediction, we are sure only that Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians (chapters 7 and 26). From the Scythian invasion, which perhaps occasioned Jeremiah's first appearance as a prophet, on to the end of his life, he is sure that judgment against Judah is the purpose of God, and that neither Jerusalem nor the temple is to escape. In 4: 23–27 the coming desolation and chaos are described as if actually seen in vivid anticipation. But it is not vision, but rather insight and moral judgment, on which Jeremiah rests the most incredible of his forecasts, that of Jerusalem's overthrow (7: 1–15).

Ezekiel stands between the prophets of the second sort and those of the third, the apocalyptic type. In part, his message is identical with Jeremiah's. He affirms, with him, that Jerusalem is about to fall. But his nature, his religious experience, his teaching and outlook, differ radically from those of the prophets before him. We are concerned here only to notice that in Ezekiel vision and ecstasy are revived, while prophecy in its more ethical and spiritual qualities begins that decline from which it did not recover until the coming of Christ. The vision of Ezekiel, told in the first chapter, is naturally to be compared with that of Isaiah. The physical details are far more elaborated, but the intellectual content is far poorer, and of ethical or spiritual significance one can hardly speak. This theophany is seen in trance, and conveys to the prophet the visible assurance that Yahweh is free from the temple of Jerusalem; that the temple can fall without violating his transcendence, since his throne is a chariot that moves freely where it will; and that the exiles in Babylonia are not shut off from the worship of him, since he can come to them there. The departure of

Yahweh from the temple before its fall and his final return to the new temple of the Messianic times form, in fact, a central thought in Ezekiel's revelation. And because God's presence in Jerusalem was physically conceived, so his departure and return must be physically experienced. It is for this reason that vision, in the proper sense, is a natural form in which his revelation is received and expressed. Over against the inwardness of Jeremiah's experience of God, we feel the prevailing externality that separates God from man in Ezekiel. The spirit of God lifts him up and carries him away bodily. The hand of Yahweh is strong upon him and forces him to come and go against his will. He is translated from Babylonia to Jerusalem, where he sees the abominations that are defiling the temple, and beholds the departure of Yahweh through the east gate. And then the spirit lifts him up and brings him "in the vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea," where he tells the captives the things Yahweh had shown him (8–11). Later on, long after the destruction of the city, he is once more carried to Palestine "in the visions of God," and is shown God's plans for a new Jerusalem, a new land of Israel, a new temple; measurements and details being imparted to him by an angelic interpreter. So that even his law, his contribution to the coming priestly law of the new Judaism, comes to him in the form of a vision, and is experienced and imparted as things seen and heard (40–48).

In spite of all this, Ezekiel often announces like the others "the words of Yahweh," with no evidence expressed or implied, of visionary accompaniments; and at certain points, especially in his exposition of the rights of the individual before God, in his description of God's shepherding of his scattered people, and most of all in his conception of the renewal of human nature by the incoming of the divine spirit, his message is worthy of following theirs (18, 34, 36: 25–27). Nevertheless his conception of God and hence

his idea of worship and his experience of inspiration are rather revivals of earlier views and anticipations of later and lower levels than those reached by the men we have been studying. His vision is meant to impress us with the distance of God rather than his nearness. The approach to him is long and distracting; and when we reach him in the end, even though he has "a likeness as the appearance of a man," yet we see scarcely more than a blaze of light before which man falls on his face and cannot rise until summoned and empowered by God himself.

What, now, shall be our judgment in regard to the experiences characteristic of these greater prophets, who are also best known and have so great and creative an influence upon the spiritual history of the world?

Among the four whom we have principally considered only one, Isaiah, can be said to be characterized by visionary experiences, and even in his case vision proper seems limited to the one crisis which made him a prophet. Moreover, the contents of this vision is such that vision is not necessary for its discovery or confirmation. We know, of course, that what Isaiah saw is not the objective reality of what stands about the throne of God. We can even see that a certain danger belonged to the experience of these truths in vision form. Other men might easily suppose either that such knowledge was beyond their powers, or that all that could be expected of them was the obedient acceptance of the word of the prophet. There was even some danger that the great thoughts themselves might be obscured by this form of utterance. The initiative belongs entirely to God, and the attitude of man seems to be so entirely that of receptiveness that a weakening of moral effort might result, and one might expect salvation from God on the sole condition of passiveness and assent. These very dangers re-appear in connection with Paul, whose experience, as we have seen, was not

unlike that of Isaiah. These tendencies were not in accordance with the purpose either of Isaiah or of Paul. Both men assumed that all others could and should see for themselves the truths which came to them through this opening of their eyes to things unseen. They both assumed also that faith in a God who saves the humble and believing will stimulate, rather than displace, moral endeavor. What is important is to recognize that the truth and the importance of a prophet's message do not depend on the psychological condition in which it is received. We have in every case to judge value and truth and importance in human history independently and by our own tests. Men in a sober state of mind may utter great and epoch-making truths, or commonplaces, without power and effect, and men in an ecstasy or under the impulse of great emotional exaltation may do great things or little, may utter new truths or familiar truisms or things untrue. So that the bare question whether a prophet's self-consciousness is natural or supernatural, normal or abnormal, carries us but a little way toward a proper estimation of his significance. In any case, it is that which is within that counts. No seeing or hearing can give man a knowledge of God. However vividly a prophet imagines and objectifies, what he gives us is always an event or a reality of his soul.

Perhaps the question which a psychologist would most like to ask of an Amos or a Jeremiah is, just what they meant when they said, "Thus saith Yahweh," or "The word of Yahweh." This is the almost uniform introduction to the oracles of the great prophets. It is difficult to suppose that it describes in any sense an objective hearing. It is a strange manner, and no doubt expresses a high self-consciousness, for a man to speak and write in the character of Yahweh, speaking in the first person. Yet it is difficult to avoid the impression that it is a manner, a convention, and means nothing more, though this, indeed, is

much, than that the prophet is fully convinced that what he says is the truth of God. This strange consciousness is well expressed by that lesser contemporary of Isaiah, the prophet Micah, when he says, in contrast to the prophets who preached because they were bribed to do so, and therefore shall have no vision and no answer of God, "But I, truly, am full of power, even the spirit of Yahweh, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."

In regard both to the seeing of visions and the hearing of the word of God three possible explanations seem to present themselves: first, that of pure objectivity and supernaturalism, a voice really heard, heavenly or future things really seen; second, a mental experience capable of psychological explanation; as either where a given object calls forth a corresponding idea, or where an idea, after much pondering, comes at last to receive a plastic representation; here a condition more or less ecstatic or dream-like can be assumed; third, some experience seen as one looks back upon it to have been the means by which truth was gained or virtue attained, and hence interpreted as an act of God, or as having come about at the divine command. Only the second and third of these explanations are open to the modern mind.

The convictions and decisions of these prophets went against current opinion and they concerned matters of vital significance to the people and to their rulers. One cannot stand thus alone against prevailing sentiment and the authority of those in power unless he has the conviction that his truth is the word of God. Ordinarily and normally our moral convictions come to us from tradition and training. When one turns against his traditions and his environment, and chooses a way of his own, he must consciously ask himself why he is sure he is right. What power in distinction from that of the community and in contrast

to it forces him into positions where he is exposed to hatred and persecution? It is worth remembering, also, that the primitive prophet, whose equipment was nothing but his capacity to become religiously insane, could be tolerated by the rulers and the priests of a community, and even welcomed as proof effective with the multitude of the reality of divine beings and the necessity of religion. But when the prophet is manifestly sane and speaks to reason and conscience, uttering truths radical and subversive of traditional customs in morals and religion, he becomes dangerous to those whose interests are in the maintenance of the existing order. One whose convictions force him to stand as a fortified wall against the assaults of the people, requires to know that God is with him, and that his convictions are God's words.

What has been said should not be understood to mean that the examples of these prophets justify the psychologists in saying that all religious experience is subjective and does not involve the reality of God. This is not in any way involved in the effort to understand the religious experiences of these prophets in the light of our own, and as experiences which we may hope to share. Nothing can be more certain than that these prophets, to whom vision and ecstasy were things of slight importance, believed themselves to be in the presence, not indeed, of mysterious powers, but of a supreme personality who knew them and whom they knew. This personality had a proper name, Yahweh. He was Israel's God; but the prophets experienced him each as his own God, and prophecy reaches its height in the realization of this relationship as that of friend with friend. The prophets of the first type were hardly individual. Their prophetic inspiration was the experience of a group. And the prophets of the third order again lost their individuality, hiding it behind the veil of an assumed authorship. Prophecy in both of these forms is an exceptional endowment, and must re-

main exceptional if it is to have effect. If all men were seized with frenzy, society would be the chaos of a madhouse. If the heavens above and the course of future events were spread out before the eye of every man, the calling of the apocalyptical seers would come to an end. In fact, the powers they claimed are so high and divine that they feared to be disbelieved if they claimed them for themselves. Such powers could be credibly affirmed only of those men of the remote past who were already put by common consent in a place apart from ordinary men, and on the side of God. Only Enoch, who walked with God, or Noah, who alone was righteous and perfect in his generations and alone with his house escaped the divine judgment, or Abraham, God's friend, or Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, or Elijah, who ascended bodily to heaven, or some other prophet to whom heaven was opened, or scribe to whom the law of God was shown, could be supposed to have powers so above those of man. That such men saw the future could be demonstrated by long centuries of the fulfillment of their words, down to the writer's present. Prophets of the early and late period, then, claimed unique powers, but actually lost all individual distinctness and personality. Now the great prophets are conscious that they are different from average men, but they do not desire to remain different. Their knowledge of God is that inner knowledge which is possible to all men, and is the greatness and joy of human nature. Yet each one of them stands distinct as a great personality whose character and life spoke his message more clearly than his words. And the message they spoke and embodied was also personal, for their message was God. They knew themselves to be under bondage to God and subject to his compelling will. But in this bondage they found freedom; mastered as they were by God, they were yet more than other men masters of themselves. This experience is essentially emotional in its character; it is not an

idea, but an attitude of the whole man, and toward the whole world. A passionate love for God, an enthusiastic championship of his cause, masters them and burns in them as a flame. They do not see how it can be otherwise with any man, God being what he is. And as they do not need to look to the heavens above or to the world to come for God, but only into their own hearts, so, also, they see him in things immediately about them and in the events of the day. To find great and deep meanings in the actualities of the present, to see the hand and feel the power of God in every common thing, is as characteristic of the prophet as it is of the artist and poet. The prophet sees all things, and especially the things nearest at hand, in the light of the eternal.

The word "spirit" was one that helped some prophets to express their sense of the nearness of the divine power and of its essential oneness in nature with man; though some, like Jeremiah, seemed to fear its use lest it suggest mere ecstasy and supernaturalism. It was a word that needed redemption from some of its early antecedents in order to serve the purposes of ethical religion.

Our first impression when we approach the psychological study of the deeper religious experiences of the prophets is that such study may prove unfruitful and even unwholesome, partly because we are not prophets ourselves, and seem to assume too much when we undertake to measure their experience by our own, partly because they were so far from being psychologists, and did not reflect, as modern scientists do, on the sources or nature of their experience; in fact, if they had done so, we instinctively feel that they could have been prophets no longer, and that the world would have suffered an irreparable loss. Can we, then, who cannot help being psychologists, still hope to make our own in any real sense the experience of these mighty men of God? If ecstasy or vision were the distinctive mark of

prophecy, then we should have to say that the scientific understanding of such experiences brought with it incapacity to reproduce them. But we have found, on the contrary, that psychological studies, in fact, have this effect only upon prophecy of the crude and primitive type, and upon that later development of it which claims to give knowledge of times and worlds out of the reach of the mind of man, claims disproved by the mere passage of time, and still more by the mind's growing mastery of the mysteries of the physical universe. The study of the religious experiences of the great prophets, if conducted with sympathy and reverence, has quite the opposite and an altogether favorable effect upon the religious life. We cannot, indeed, put ourselves back into their ways of thinking, any more than into the actual experiences of Israel with which they had to do. But our modern studies re-discover the prophets as men great in those qualities of character and spirit which do not change from age to age. We need, and sha'l always need, as Arnold says, the inspiration of their enthusiasm for the power that makes for righteousness. We need, also, as Arnold could not say, the inspiration of their intimacy with the personal God, the assurance of their friendship with the great Friend.

These prophets were great personalities. It is because their truth was true in themselves, truly incarnated in their spirits, that it had freshness and vitality, and was new however often it might have been said before. It is for the same reason that others could not but feel and know the truth of their words, however radical and counter to their wishes and interests and habits they were. And again the same fact, that they were themselves their message, was the secret of its power to work out its realization in events. Newness, persuasiveness, and creative power, belong to truth that is embodied in persons.

But the prophets did not set out to be grea- personalities,

and never thought of viewing their prophetic calling as a way to personal influence and power. On the contrary they became great only by the renunciation of greatness. It is of them that the truth is preëminently true that one who loses himself shall find himself. No prophet can choose or achieve the prophet's calling by himself; nor can he exercise prophetic gifts for himself. He is chosen and called by God, and he is sent to his fellow men. He is God's messenger and agent, and does not even speak in his own name. His "Thus saith the Lord" is not self-assertion or a high self-consciousness, it is self-denial in complete subjection to the thought and will of the Eternal. And if his self-consciousness is lost in God-consciousness on the one side, it passes over on the other into national consciousness. The prophets do and sacrifice, they pray and hope, for their nation; and at times assume even in action the very character and personality of the nation (comp. Hos. 1–3, Isa. 20, Jer. 27–28, Ezek. 4, 24: 15–27). Yet in spite of this loss of self in God and for him, and in and for their nation, or rather, precisely because of this loss, and in and through it, they find so large and great a self that we can scarcely look at them as human, and doubt our right to understand their experience or to look for any parallel to it in our own.

We are not, indeed, understanding nor in any measure sharing the religious experience of the prophets unless we know what it means to lose ourselves in God, and to lose ourselves in our fellow men, and by this double loss of self to find our true selves and to realize our higher selves. Something of this we do no doubt experience whenever in our search for truth or in our response to beauty or to high ideals of virtue we are conscious of a higher and divine realm of worth and of reality, from which we come, to which we belong, which we too rarely perceive or possess, or in any vivid sense feel to be ourselves. And, on the other hand, none of us can be without some experience of

that other larger self, the society of our fellow men, revealed to us by the instincts of self-denial in service and of disinterestedness in loyalty and devotion.

It is such experiences that teach us the true nature of the mysticism of the prophets. It is such experiences to which we are helped and in them confirmed and strengthened more than by any other means by those holy souls into whom has entered more abundantly and in whom has remained in more abiding power that Holy Spirit which loves to make of men friends of God and prophets.

# MYSTICISM IN INDIA

EDWARD WASHBURN HOPKINS

If mysticism included all that is mysterious, it were possible to find it in almost every Hindu cult and to trace it back to the earliest literature. There is, for example, the Vedic wild Muni, who probably reflects a mystic *rapprochement* with divinity, analogous to that of the dancing dervish; there is the mystic communion established by the Vedic sacrifices (especially to the Manes), in which the worshipper receives divine power through a commensal meal; there is the (epic) hypnotic trance, in which the operator compels the obedience of the subject by what is regarded as a mystic power; and finally there is the Brahmanic apocalyptic mysticism, which begins with a vision of the world to come and culminates in the visit of Naciketas to the realm of death. This last form is of some historical interest because it may have led eventually to the vision of Arda Virâf, which in turn has been supposed to be the (Sassanid) model of the Divina Commedia.[1]

But these forms of "mysticism" must here be passed over allusively; nor need we linger to explain the "pantheistic mystic speculation" of the Rig Veda poets, who in x. 29 have derived Being from Not-Being through the agency of heat and desire, which is the "primal seed of mind," and in x. 90 describe the world as caused by the sacrifice of the Divine Man, whose body in part is the world itself. Of

[1]In regard to the curious case of epic hypnotism see the writer's article on Yoga technique in the *Jour. Am. Orient. Soc.* XXII (1901). After RV. x. 135, the Taittirîya Brâhmana iii. 11, 8, gives a vision of the next world, later elaborated in the Kathâ Upanishad.

such naïve (not profound) speculation there is a plenty in the Vedic age, early and late. For our purpose they are negligible, since the mysticism we are examining is of another sort, namely that which is exhibited in the ineffable but transient state of the soul at one with the divine (or with its supranormal equivalent), the soul being either intellectually or emotionally intuitive of, or identified with, the world-power.

Five divisions of the subject appear as the phenomena show themselves in history: First, in the mystics of the Upanishads. Second, in the early Buddhistic mystics. Third, in the scientific Yoga. Fourth, in a blending of Brahmanic and later Buddhistic mysticism. Fifth, in the mediæval emotional mystics.

In the first four of these divisions we have to do not so much with individuals as with schools, forms of religious faith, general, not, as in the isolated cases of mysticism known to us by the names Plotinus, Francis, etc., special abnormal phenomena, but systematically induced and perfectly controlled states. Even in the Theragâthâs of the early Buddhists, although they antedate our known systems, the individual appears to be working under a system, and the name attached to the special *aññâ* or gnosis, is without historical value.

The object of all Brahmanic and Buddhist mysticism is to escape from life as it is into a state mystically conceived as larger and better, to escape from the bonds of individuality into the unbound, from the limitation of time into the eternal, albeit that escape may bring with it the renunciation of personality. Theistically expressed, man seeks union with God not by going to him but by realizing him, the realization itself being identical with the attainment. He who knows Brahma becomes Brahma. This is perhaps no more than the logical extension of early Vedic identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm, but it expresses itself otherwise and indeed in

various ways. To reach God by immediacy often leads either to metaphysics or to magic. But the true mystic is neither a metaphysician nor a magician; he knows by an illumination, by intuition.

To begin with our first division. Early philosophical treatises from about the seventh century B. C. and known as Seances (Upanishads) with a connotation of the mysterious, show that their authors sought the changeless One and found him beyond reason, "not to be attained with the mind," a One of which can be posited only negation of attributes; he is within the heart smaller than a grain of mustard seed, yet he is without, greater than all the worlds; he is man, woman, fire; yet he is definable only with the words "not, not." Philosophically this Being is at first purely idealistic; nothing exists save as it exists in the individual. This pure idealism, confronted with the cold facts of life, material phenomena, was subsequently modified to the extent that phenomena were regarded not as unreal but as a form of the real. In either case the individual soul can by intuition based on knowledge but surpassing it, realize the immutable One, and in this intuition, which to the later writers is a special grace of God, man attains to oneness with the One. So far this is a noetic application of a reasoned philosophy; but the philosophers are poets (writing largely in verse) and as poets they become emotional mystics. The vision of the eternal is one that causes not only immortality, that is, conjoins them with the immutable immortal, but is the wellspring of ineffable joy. They feel the mystic rapture. Thus:

> He who has realized th' immortal Brahm
> As One without beginning, middle, end,
> He enters into pure serenity
> And everlasting peace (Mândukya Karikâ).

> As God of all, All-god, maker of all things;
> As he that in the heart of man abideth,

By the heart alone conceived, by mind and fancy —
Who thus know God, they have become immortal.
Within his light, nor night nor day existeth,
Being, Not-being; all is he, the blesséd;
He is the treasure sought by Vedic poets;
From him was born all knowledge and all wisdom.
Above, below, across, or in the middle,
None hath grasped God; nor is there any image
Of him whose only name is this, Great Glory.
His form invisible is and always will be;
For he in mind and heart abides. Who know him
As their own soul, they have become immortal.

And again:

The soul of all things is the one controller
Who makes his one form manifold in many.
The wise that him as their own soul acknowledge,
They have eternal joy, but not so, others.
Among the transient he is the everlasting,
The only wise one he among the unwise,
The One mid many. Him perceive the sages
In their own souls and feel a peace eternal.
The sun shines not, nor moon nor stars nor lightning,
Nor earthly fire, within the All-soul's heaven;
For he alone is the light that all shines after,
And by his light is all the world illumined.[2]

The individual soul is here not imagined to be in a state of longing to merge itself with the All-Soul; it does not long for communion with God. It strives to realize that it is God; that there is no duality. Destroy the illusion of duality and you are immediately filled with the consciousness of oneness with the Absolute Power, Brahma, the World Soul, Atman. The so-called New Testament of India, the Bhagavad Gîtâ, is really only a theistic continuation of the Upanishads. It too lays stress upon the principle of non-duality; but it introduces a new element in stressing still more the grace of God as a God of love. Hence the devotee

[2] *India, Old and New,* p. 85. From the Kâthaka Upanishad.

is said to "come to the Lord." Thus: "He who works for me, he who is intent on me, he who is free from attachments, without emnity toward any creature, he comes to me" (xi. 55); and again: "They who in me renounce all effort, who are bent on me, meditate on me, draw near to me, of them am I the savior from the round of births and deaths. Therefore set thy heart on me, enter into me with thy soul, and thou shalt dwell with me in my home above. But if thou canst not concentrate thy mind upon me, then seek to reach me by union through assiduous practice" (*ib.* xii. 6–9). Here devotion comes first and Yoga discipline last, which, as we shall see, inverts the order of schematic mysticism. The disciple here seeks union with God, becomes the Eternal, and with infinite rapture feels that he is "united with the Eternal," for he sees his soul as one with all and all with him; he cannot lose God for he dwells in God (*ib.* vi. 27 f).

Turning now to early Buddhistic mysticism, we are met at once with the question, What scope for mysticism in a religion which admits no soul and denies God? We may perhaps get the answer most easily if we pause to glance at the mysticism which arose in China as the result of Taoism, a digression perhaps pardonable here inasmuch as no provision has been made in this course for Chinese mysticism.

Tao is not a personal God; it is the way of the gods or the right order of the universe, than which Lao Tzŭ admitted nothing more divine. Yet his follower, Chuang Tzŭ, privileged interpreter of Lao Tzŭ, held Tao to be the universal principle of good and a manifestation of the divine first principle or Absolute. Chuang Tzŭ regards it as a sort of world-spirit with which he feels himself blessed in being one, though it is the unknowable ultimate, manifest in nature; and inspired by this thought the later Po Chü says that they are happy who delight in Tao's laws:

> Within my breast no sorrow can abide,
> I feel the great world's spirit through me thrill,

> And as a cloud I drift before the wind.
> Since life and death in circles come and go,
> Of little moment are the days to spare.
> Thus strong in faith I wait and long to be
> One with the pulsings of eternity.[3]

" Pass into the infinite," said Chuang Tzŭ, " your final rest is there." And again: " By becoming oblivious of self people become the people of God. But only those are capable of this who have entered into the eternal harmony of God."

With this example of Chinese mysticism in mind we may better appreciate what the early Buddhist sought. He too sought to bring himself into harmony with the pulsings of eternity; above all he sought by so doing to escape from the " bog of birth and death," that endless revolution of the wheel on which every one was bound and like Ixion was in hell. His means was the conventional accepted means. He retired into a lonely place and began a regular course of illuminative meditations with concentrated auto-hypnotic effort, gaining a tranced condition out of which he came with clarified mind at harmony with the world-order and already advanced into that state in which he was transported beyond all fear of rebirth. The rapture is expressed in terms of salvation or Nibbâna. The so-called Psalms of the early Buddhists are collections of confessions attributed to this or that primitive Brother or Sister of the Order. One of these Sisters gives as her *aññâ* or confession of faith: " Buddha's daughter I, born of his word, his blessed word, who stand transported with Nibbana's bliss alway " (Theri, xxxi). It is often a serenity rather than a rapture: " Cool and serene I see Nibbâna's bliss " (Sister Sakula, xlix). But in these cases of sudden insight, the Heavenly Eye often appears. So Sona says, " Even as I grappled with the cause of things, clear shone for me the Eye Celestial " (xlv),

[3] *Musings of a Chinese Mystic,* by Lionel Giles, in Wisdom of the East series, London, 1906.

which immediately leads her to " win the ecstasy of emancipation."

" Delight in truth is supreme delight " and " to know . . . is Nibbâna, supreme happiness " (Dhammap. 203, 354). The mystic attains by way of apprehension to the knowledge, as he attains to the pure being and immortality desired, just as by the same means he attains to moral excellence (universal friendliness). This conjunction of immortality, truth, and love reminds one forcibly of the striking expression of Augustine, who in his *Confessions* explains, " Truth, love, eternity, thou art my God." Again, like Wordsworth, the Buddhist might say, I not believed but saw all nature one. He sees immortality. Synonymous with the *dibba* or heavenly eye is the epithet " purified " applied to the eye and the explanation that it is " super-human." It may give a vision of past births or of future bliss but above all it sees truth and, as in the case of the Upanishadist, knowledge is emancipation. In such a state the mystic may be illuminated with a call to teach, preach, or compose verses, and then these verses become his *aññâ,* gnosis, acknowledgment, confession. The chief point here is that, though it is long before we have the scheme of scientific illumination, yet the operations in the case of the saints contemporary with Buddha or up to the third century B. C., to which date they may be provisionally assigned, show the same discipline.

The stages of joy in the mystic contemplation are described in the Yogâvacara's manual as introduced by a phrase, " I beg (or pray) for the bliss " of this or that sort. The mystic then seeks to verify or realize, *sacchi karoti,* the real sources of experience, and these with the impermanence of all things, and then, through this realization, to master the process of change and free himself from it, by means of devices, *kasinas* which are like Boehme's gazing at pewter, whereby he " beheld the real properties of all things." The Buddhist induces abnormal consciousness by the methodical process

called Samâdhi, first by focussing his thought, *cittass' ekaggatâ,* and thus attaining 1) a little thrill *khuddata pîti;* 2) a momentary joy, *khaṇika pîti* ("momentary flash"); 3) a flood of emotion, *okkantika pîti,* in which he is submerged as with a wave; 4) an elated rapture, *ubbega pîti,* in which he is transported, not only mentally but physically, so that he can rise and float off; and 5) an "all pervading ecstasy, *pharaṇa pîti.*[4]

According to later views, "the unintelligent has no trance and the unintranced has no intelligence" (Dhammap. 372). But the intuitive flash of knowledge, or suffusion of insight in the early period may be the result of a personal experience rather than of a system of concentrated meditation. Thus in the Theri (xlvii), one of the Sisters has a vision of the Buddha and of Truth through visual observation of what happens to water when it flows out and what happens to a lamp when it is extinguished, and this is her gnosis (knowledge and confession):

> "Unto my cell I go and take my lamp,
> And seated on my couch I watch the flame;
> Then grasp the pin and push the wick right down
> Into the oil — Nibbana of my lamp!
> So to my mind comes freedom."

The *Manual of a Mystic* seems to refer to this exercise: "Meditating on the wax-taper I aspire to attain bliss" (p. 63). But it is interesting to notice how often the early Buddhists are helped to their gnosis by this vision of the Buddha. Harita, shocked into moral consciousness by the sudden death of his beloved wife, has a vision of the Buddha, who appears and, admonishing him, leads him to "develop his insight" (Thera xxix). Tissa is asleep and sees a vision

[4] See the account in Mrs. Rhys Davids' *Buddhist Psychology,* London, 1914, 187 f., and the (Yogâvacara) *Manual of a Mystic,* 1916, pp. xi, xiii, and notes, p. 7 f.; examples, e. g. p. 23.

of the Buddha shedding glory upon him and admonishing him and therewith he became emancipated (xxxix). Emancipation is here freedom from existence bound to Karma, extinction of spatial life as well as extinction of desires, one being dependent on the other. Thus Uttara (cxli) says: *nibbayissam anâsavo,* as explained by the commentator, "by the expiry of the last moment of consciousness I shall utterly pass away like a fire without fuel." So Buddha himself said, as did others after him (*ib* cliii), "stayed is the further rise of consciousness; blown even here to nothingness."

Buddha himself attained to enlightenment through the recognized series of trances. With him who was himself the Supreme Lord, there could be no vision save of the Truth, which led him finally to that jhâna-ecstasy which reappears in the gnosis of his disciples, e. g. Theri (cxii).

The completed system of the Hîna school is given by Buddhaghosha in the fifth century A.D. as the Way of Purity, *Visuddhi Magga.* Here forty subjects of meditation are enlisted, ten pleasing, ten gruesome, ten being reflections on Buddha, morality, etc., and ten being exalted states, joy, compassion, love, etc. The novice is given certain subjects to meditate upon, which brings him to one trance after another. Hundreds of times he must repeat formulas connected with each subject, sitting retired, his eyes fixed on a red disk, till he sees it as well with his eyes closed as open. Then he retires to his hut and "develops the reflex," abandoning investigation and consideration, till he attains to the ecstasy of the third and to the supernatural calm of the fourth trance. Then he receives the clarified "divine eye" of purified intuition.[5]

[5] An account of these trances will be found in Warren's *Buddhism in Translations,* and in Mr. E. W. Burlingame's *Legends,* from the Dhammapada Commentary, in HOS. vol. xxviii. See also Mrs. Rhys David's *Buddhist Psychology,* the Quest Series, London, 1914. As a result of his mystic vision the Buddhist may attain to the miraculous powers acquired by all Yogins.

Almost synchronous with this exposition of Buddhistic Yoga is the Brahmanic Yoga of Patañjali, our third division. Here, however, the end sought is the isolation of the soul from the bonds of the sense through sloughing off the aspects common to matter, till the soul reaches a pure condition in which it can establish a relation of immediate perception or intuition of truth, of things as they are. Patañjali lived between three and five hundred A. D. He refutes idealism and his system is an extension of dualistic teaching; it gives the means of attaining to the Yoga-state of full self-expression. The mind by concentration learns how to resist fluctuations *vṛtti,* till it attains dispassionateness. This concentration, *samâdhi,* is obtained by certain exercises, such as breathings and postures, and gives insight or intuition. Quite as important in the method are the sentiments to be cultivated, friendliness, happiness, compassion, etc. The balanced state of mind finally attained then brightens with conscious knowledge. Positive aids to Yoga are (a) abstention from injury, from falsehood, theft, incontinence and rapacity (acceptance of gifts), five in all; (b) five observances, cleanliness, contentment, self-castigation, study, and devotion to the Īśvara or Lord-soul; (c) postures, described at length; (d) regulation of breath; (e) withdrawal of the senses, which leads to mastery of the organs of sense; and (f) fixed attention.

The result of the late state of *samâdhi* is that one attains to objectless meditation or pure ecstasy, which frees the spirit from ignorance, especially from the delusion that spirit has any identity with matter. Now three things are noticeable here. First that the Yoga is a sober psychological study which, however, immediately resolves itself into magic (mastery of matter) ; second, that it admits devotion to the timeless Lord-soul (not divinity), as equally valid with its own system; and, third, that it makes isolation or separation of soul from matter depend on ecstatic trance-induced intuition.

As to the first point, abstention from theft makes all jewels come to one; by binding the mind to one object, one fuses the knower with the known and obtains intuitive knowledge of times (past births, etc.); and concentrated insight controls as well as understands objects (language of birds, course of stars). So the Brahmanic Yogin (like the Buddhist) can become invisible and perform tricks of pure magic. Such is the content of the Vibhûti-pada (third book). As to the second point, what is elsewhere of prime importance, the favor of the Lord-soul is here negligently admitted as one of the five observances but is in itself productive of the rapturous intuition gained by the formal system. The third point alone makes it possible or rather imperative that the Yoga should be explained as a mystic system, according to which the whole life is oriented with reference to one idea until there is an emotional transformation corresponding to this focussed state, a transformation equivalent to absolute dispassionateness. This state of Kaivalya (isolation) is the culmination of the system; in it the self as energy of intellect rests grounded upon itself (without relation to the aspects of matter), eternally freed from the effects of Karma. But this mysticism is in no sense an intuition of God (there is no God), only of truth in regard to the soul.

The Mahâyâna, in distinction from the Hîna, was a combination of early Buddhistic and late Brahmanic philosophy. It makes a fourth form of mysticism in our list because, though based on Yoga, it has a different goal from that of Yoga and of the Hînayâna. It appears well set forth in Asanga's *Mahâyâna Sûtrâlamkâra*,[6] which explains the Mahâyâna not in nihilistic terms, as in the Mâdhyamika School of Nâgârjuna but according to the Yogâcâra School. It was about the time of the Christian era, when religion turned from solitude to the world that Buddhism expanded

[6] Edited by Sylvain Lévi, Paris, text, 1907; introduction and translation, 1911.

into that greater philosophy which may have been affected by the Manichæan and gnostic influence then stealing eastward, that Asanga taught. He lived in Ghandhara, in the West. The idea of the trinity which as Lévi (p. 18) says, "semble aussi trahir des influences étrangères," arises suddenly at this time. Early Buddhism no longer satisfied a church which had outgrown the cloister. Iran, near where Asanga was born, was agitated by a religious revolution (the restoration of Zoroastrianism) affected by Jewish and Christian thought, so that it is not impossible that the ideas of Asanga were affected by these and by the Logoi to which his Dharmas correspond. Be that as it may, his work in its vision, ecstasy, and magic is essentially Indic.[7]

In this system the discipline is based on a mystic union like that of love. To the six organs (sense-organs and *manas*) Asanga adds *Ālaya-vijñâna,* the fundamental affirmation of existence as the base of thought: *sum ergo cogito.* Pure being can rid itself of the latent effect of actions by attaining to cessation of difference when the universal consciousness takes the place of self-consciousness (the Ego no longer being "other" than the whole). Truth realized in the intellect (Bodhi, as agent) leads to communion with the Buddha. Buddha here is the real, neither being nor not-being. Containing all, the real does not reveal itself; it excludes duality; it gives greater bliss than Nirvâna (as cessation). To reach Bodhi is to become a Bodhisat and this is accomplished by the passage through ten *bhûmis* or stages from Faith to Buddha as preliminary and final experiences. With the first stage one acquires the knowledge of the ideas or ideal phenomena; in the second, one becomes spotless and

[7] Compare Senart, *Rev. Hist. Relig.* 1900, Nov. Dec., on the relation with the Yoga; also his *Origines Bouddhiques* Musée Guimet, 1907, and for the bhûmis his Mahâvastu (1882), vol. i, Introduction, p. xxvii f. The Mahâvastu Bhûmis (possibly seven at first, ib. xxxv) are rather ethical stages, lacking the illumination found in Asanga's list.

is in perpetual ecstatic thought, *dhyâna,* solely occupied with *samâdhi* (as mystic union); in the third, the mystic may reënter the world without danger (of losing what he has gained); in the fourth, he exercises the Wings of Illumination (Bodhipaksha), virtues and powers; thus in the fifth stage he appears supernaturally wise, conceives the ideal as the universal, etc., and in the sixth comes face to face with reality (Nirvâna as the sum of existence); then in the seventh stage he starts on the way to becoming a Bodhisat, having only the latent impressions left from Karma. In the eighth, freed from personality, he loses even these latent effects and becomes illuminated without his own thought. In the ninth and tenth stages, respectively, he achieves the stage of the Good Spirit and that of the absolutely illumined Buddha.

The Mahâyâna (Mâdhyamika) is found as a mystic philosophy also in Japan. Kobo Daishi there taught that man is essentially one with the Supreme (as Buddha) and even in this life may attain to the Buddha-state. This belief is based on the theory of Kongokai or Diamond World (of ideas) existing in universal thought, to which the world of phenomena is parallel. In the world of ideas the Great Sun, Dainichi, is Vairocana, the All, from whom emanate Bodhisattvas, from whom again emanate lesser beings, leading to phenomena. Shakyamuni, Amitâbha, Akshobhya, and Ratnasambhava stand round the central Vairocana like planets, each with its satellites; or as the center of an eight-petal lotus, Amitâbha, Mitteya, Manjusri, Avalokiteshvara, etc. Man, as an emanation from him, is one with the sun of life and of truth, Vairocana. Ideas are the source of things; so if one has the correct idea, one can control the thing. Hence Shingon, True Word, as name of this sect of the ninth century, which is a mixture of idealism and thaumaturgy, for the True soon becomes the Magic Word, which may even ease the sufferings of the dead. In the Zen sect, truth is communicated by spiritual telepathy rather

than by book-learning; its chief characteristic is meditative abstraction, not a new idea but made the special mark of the sect by Eisai (twelfth century), though the sect was introduced into China by the first Patriarch, Bodhidharma, in the sixth century. Its aim is not so much to escape from rebirth as to escape the limitation of the empirical self by means of union with the Greater Self. As in Yoga, the practice is auto-hypnotic; one remains fixed and staring till one becomes conscious of oneness with all reality, losing all consciousness of self, an ecstatic state in which one passes beyond distinctions of good and evil, wise and foolish, and attains insight through quietism. The minute directions as to the means of attainment, postures, etc., are those of the Yoga; one sits with crossed legs, the right hand on the left foot, palm up, etc.

In the thirteenth century Nichiren converted the relapsed Buddhism of his day into what he regarded as primitive Buddhism. With his missionary efforts we are not here concerned. He himself was a thorough mystic, who taught that the kingdom of God and God are within. One should strive for the realization of the kingdom of the Lord, who is the soul of every man. The three-fold mystery consists in the Supreme Being, Honzon, the Holy See, Kaidan, and the Sacred Title, Daimoku. This last is enlightenment, Sambhogo-kâya, in distinction from the Dharma-kâya or Maṇḍala (Supreme Being), and from the actual manifestation, Nirmâṇa-kâya, the realization of Buddha's mercy organized in the place of the church universal or Holy See, as Buddha in reality is another name for the orderly cosmos. Nichiren believed himself to be the reincarnation of an ancient saint and his method also was that of the Yogin: "I sit on the mat of meditation and *in vision* I see every truth." The final aim, however, is complete realization of the Supreme Being in man's own soul.

Thus these Mahâyânists, both Hindu and Japanese, seek

through visionary experience and the ecstatic trance to realize truth or God, through the identification of self with real being, sometimes as the world-soul.

Finally we come to that form of mysticism in which devotion plays a larger part than intellect. In the Upanishad era the merging of the self with the world-self is likened in its swooning-like state, but only thus, to the submerged consciousness in conjugal embrace. Emphasis on this leads to an erotic interpretation of intuition from which the cold ethics of early Buddhism preserved its devotees, the more easily as Buddha himself was no subject for romantic love. But with Buddhism rose the feeling of intense devotion which may easily express itself as love. In the early stage this devotion is rather a form of faith than of emotion. Even in Shankara, *bhakti,* the technical name of this attitude, still means contemplative concentration. And in the Bhagavad Gîtâ, though the connotation is that of affection, *bhakti* is still without any erotic tinge. As has already been observed, the Gîtâ has rather the content of an Upanishad based upon a belief in a man-god form of the All-god. "The sun shines not, nor moon nor fire, whither they go who return not to earth but to my supreme home" (Gîtâ, xv. 6f). "Seek wisdom (the man-god declares), whose eye sees truth; see self in the All-self, the light of the world. I am that light, as I am the essence of the sap of all life. If one knows me as the Supreme Soul, knowing me as the All, with all his being he devotes himself to me" (ib. 19, *bhajati mâṃ sarvabhâvena*). Again, as to the means: "Seek solitude; eat little; control the speech, the body and the mind; be intent on union through vision (*dhyânayoga*); avoid vanity, pride, lust, wrath, avarice; so the Yogin fits himself for the eternal Brahma-being." The devotee, "serene of soul, without grief or desire, equable toward all beings, attains to highest devotion to me" (*madbhaktim labhate parâm*); through *bhakti* he learns my greatness and my being; then, taking refuge in

me, he enters the supreme; through my grace, *matprasâdât,* he obtains the eternal place. Think ever of me, be devoted to me, through my grace thou shalt cross over all difficulties" (ib xviii. 52f.). Here *maccittah statam bhava* is the key to the following (64–67), *iṣṭo' si me, manmanâ bhava mad-bhaktaḥ . . . mâm evaiṣyasi . . . priyo 'si me, ahaṃ tvâ sarvapâpebhyo mokṣayiṣyâmi, mâ śucah,* "be devoted in thought to me, to whom thou art dear, and thou shalt come to me and I will release thee from all evil." This is not the language of passionate love but of religious devotion and it is this line which the sober saints of the Marâthas followed, who rejected metaphysical for personal religion and worshipped Krishna, yet not as a lover, but as a loving god. Thus Jñânesvara, who in the thirteenth century wrote a commentary on the Gîtâ, "to save the world," preserves the pantheistic appeal; while the more emotional religion of Tukârâm and Nâmdev is still not erotic, though full of sentimental yearning for the divine. Thus Tukâ speaks:

"With milk of love Oh suckle me,
At thy abounding breast,
O mother, haste, in thee, in thee,
My sad heart findeth rest.

And again:

How poor am I; thy children we,
Mother of loving ways,
Within the shadow of thy grace
Ah, guide us, Tukâ says.

The love of man is like that of a child for its mother, or like that of a faithful wife for the husband:

How the lotus all the night,
Dreameth ever of the light,
As the stream to fishes thou,
As is to the calf the cow;

To the faithful wife how dear
Tidings of her lord to hear.[8]

The close parallel here is rather with Christian feeling, as in this plaintive hymn:

New hope to Tukâ dost thou send,
And new world bringest in;
Now know I every man a friend
And all I meet are kin.
So like a happy child I play
In thy dear world, O God,
Where all around and every day
God's bliss is spread abroad.
He still shall rule my life, for he
Is all compassionate;
His is the sole authority,
And on his will I wait.

But it was inevitable that the love proclaimed in the Gîtâ should be rather more warmly felt in certain quarters. Thus in the twelfth century, following other mystics, Jayadeva wrote a mystical poem, the *Gîtâ Govinda,* in which the attachment between the soul and God is conceived allegorically in terms of a human mistress Râdhâ, and her lover Krishna. So sensuous is the perfervid description that it has been doubted whether the poem was intended as an allegory at all. But like Solomon's Song it is religious to the very religious-minded. Parts of it, however, cannot be translated properly, but an English rhyme may give a general impression:

Say that I Râdhâ in my bower languish
Widowed till Krishna finds his way to me;
My eyes are dim with longing, all is anguish
Until, with modest gentle shame, I see my lover come to me.

So ch. ii; later on (vii) Râdhâ grows less modestly shameful:

[8] Tukârâm died in 1649. The translations are from Nicol Macnicol in *Hibbert Journal,* October 1917.

Now those who were parted grow one for ever,
One and whole-hearted; the old endeavor
To be blended is gained at last;
Glad tears are raining;
No dread now, no plaining,
Now doubt has passed
Out of each face, in the close embrace.
No fear that hereafter embracing is over,
No sorrow that causes torturing pauses.
No grief to be felt but fades and will melt
In certainty strong of a joyance immortal,
The rapture of meeting, the swift and sweet greeting
Of life that unites beyond Time's dreary portal.

This version of Edwin Arnold is not a close translation. It merely adumbrates in a chaste Victorian way the lurking appeal of the original. This appeal became the note struck by the earliest extant venacular Bengali poet Chandi Das of the fourteenth century, who belonged to the Sahajîya cult which originated in Vâmacâri Buddhism,[9] that Left-hand cult which exalts adultery and incest as hand-maidens, so to speak, of pure religion. To appreciate Chandi Das and a number of later Bengali poets of this sort a Westerner must adopt something of the combination of faith and sensuous thrill shown at those Camp Meetings when delirium is caused by a morbid religious eroticism and then add indecencies happily unknown to Western cults.[10] This rank growth is of course modified when the spirituality of these Bengali poets is exploited by natives for the benefit of foreigners. Thus Mr. Romesh C. Dutt discreetly presents Chandi Das to the West as a nerveless sentimentalist singing this ode to Krishna:

[9] Compare for the survival of Buddhism in Bengal, *The Modern Buddhism and its Followers in Ovissa,* by N. N. Vasu, Calcutta, 1911.

[10] Chandi Das made his specialty the cultivation of the Parakîya Rasa, "intercourse with another's wife," as a religious exercise; but he also urged the common use of women, as "the greatest illusion" will be of spiritual edification.

Oh how can words my thoughts portray,
Their longing and their inward strife?
In life, in death, in life to be,
Be thou the master of my life.
For to thy feet my heart is tied;
Thy mercy and thy love I crave;
I offer all, my love, my soul,
To be thy worshipper and slave.

But the speaker is that abandoned female, Râdhâ, Krishna's mistress, and the Left-hand cult portrays the union of soul and God in terms appropriate to one whose highest religious activity is adultery. On much the same lines the Tantra sums up religious exaltation in terms of mystical sex-union. Yet to the native Oriental consciousness all this apparent lubricity is an example of " to the pure all things are pure." A congregation of devout, spiritually minded Hindus will listen enraptured to the images of the Vaishnava poets without (it is said) a thought of evil, even as the Christian Fathers wrote of their love to God in language tinged with eroticism, and it is at least fair to compare, though somewhat remotely, with the Tantra Mother-cult and its sensual excesses some phases of Gnostic phallicism in connection with the Mother and Savior. But Christianity has for the most part sloughed off what the Bengali devotee still keeps as a precious religious possession.

But it would be a pity to leave Hindu mysticism in the hands of those thus purely devoted to sex-imagery. Nor is it necessary. Mr. Macnicol distinguishes between the sensual school of Vallabha and his followers and the " hysterical " school of Caitanya, the mystic of the fifteenth century, whose love for God is expressed in terms of filial devotion and whose followers are represented by the great saints of the nineteenth century. Their attitude is that of helpless childish devotion; they cling to the Mother-idea of God and lose themselves in fervid love which indeed sometimes expresses

itself sexually, if the expression may be allowed; but it is by predilection filial and results in ecstasis, in trance, and in mystic "illumination." Vivekânanda has made us acquainted with the striking personality of one of these, Râmakrishna (who influenced Keshub Chandra Sen). Râmakrishna (1833–1886) was proficient in Yoga, but he held to the teaching of the Advaita Vedanta or pure monism, though perhaps not very strictly. He was a Bhakta rather than a Jñânin, that is a devotee rather than a philosopher. "Knowing God and loving God are identical," he said, but again "knowledge enters only the outer court; into the inner room of God only a lover can enter." But more important still in his teaching is this: "One does not attain to divine illumination till one becomes like a child." His life was wholly devoted to his Mother Kâlî (the goddess), whom he saw in visions. Such visions came to him in trances in which he identified himself with the divine. Even awake, as priest of Kâlî, he so far identified himself with divinity as to put upon his own head the flowers for her shrine and take her offerings; till his world regarded him as really divine. His spiritual agonies are those of a mediæval saint. Sleepless and without food he sought God till "a torrent of spiritual light deluged his mind" and a divine voice reassured him. He had the same experiences as had Caitanya, four hundred years earlier. His Mother (God) he explained as the omniscient universal consciousness, with whom he remained "in perfect union" for six months unconscious, or only partly conscious. He identified himself at one time with Râdhâ, at another with Râma and other forms of divinity. He saw Jesus in a vision and for three days could speak of nothing but Jesus and his love. These visions he saw outside of himself, but "when they vanished they seemed to have entered into him." Fits of God-consciousness came upon him and at such times he became a different person. He would speak of himself as knowing everything, able to do

anything, and proclaimed himself the soul of Krishna, of Buddha, of Jesus, an incarnation of the divine. During his trances he suffered severe bodily injuries, once by fire and once breaking his wrist, without becoming aware of his hurt.

There is a real but rather intangible difference between the Caitanya and Râmakrishna school of mystic devotion and that of the erotic mystics, such as Vallabha. The latter, like the Buddhist Theras who boast that they have "vomited forth all love and things of beauty" and whose work is wholly for themselves, are self-centered; they seek their own good or enjoyment. Miss Underhill distinguishes mysticism, as that which gives, from magic, as that which gets. The distinction is well known in India and the better mystics renounce the getting of gold and glory. Hence they refuse to perform miracles, though their supernatural powers may make easy such feats as standing in the air, foretelling events, etc. The mystic of the type of Râmakrishna seeks no gain, though it is seldom that the emotional mystic of this sort devotes himself, as did Râmakrishna, to a life of service. The sensualist, on the other hand, religious or irreligious, is concerned only with self-satisfaction. No absolute school-difference is admitted or to be expected in this regard, but speaking generally we may say that there are these two types, the one full of devotion with a sensuous or even a sensual tinge, the other full of eroticism tinged with devotion of a mystic sort. But whether devoted and self-sacrificing or sensual and self-seeking, the emotional mystic of India in one fundamental respect remains always the same: he believes himself to be, through trance and vision, in possession of a special gnosis whereby he intuitively beholds and in beholding becomes one with God.[11]

[11] Compare Vivekânanda's history of Râmakrishna in Max Müller's *Râmakrishna, His Life and Works,* New York, 1899; and for a general survey of the subject, N. Macnicol, *Indian Theism from the Vedic to the Muhammedan Period,* Religious Quest of India,

*Résumé:* Let us in conclusion glance back at the kinds of mysticism we have been examining, and see how they differ. In the oldest period the Upanishad-philosopher reaches through a preliminary course of study a state in which he, whose general moral excellence is taken for granted, and this is true of all, becomes aware by a final process of dhyâna, beyond reason, of his own identity with God, the All-Soul, and this knowledge is bliss, as the knower thereby becomes immortal; he is, he is incarnate intelligence, one with the cosmic being-intelligence-bliss, *sac-chit-ânanda,* that describes the otherwise indescribable Soul of the Universe.

In the second class of mystics, the early Buddhists, the subject attains insight into truth, the right relation of things, through a series of trances, at the end of which he obtains, with illumination or with the heavenly eye, a vision, sometimes aided or prompted by a vision of Buddha, whereby in a state of rapt contemplation he visualizes, usually with ecstasy, by intuition and enters into a state of pure lucidity, indescribable. He feels himself changed, purged from all hindrances, living a god-like life. To this state he returns as often as he will; it is a methodical, self-induced hypnotic state. There is no merging into a world-soul, no sense of union with any Divine Power. It is not a perfectly passive state; intellect and will bring it about; he becomes conscious of infinite space, of infinite consciousness, and passes into a state where he appears to lose all consciousness, as he goes on into further trance-experiences called arûpajhâna. In this stage he attains to a condition where he can ignore gravitation and opacity

London, 1915; L. D. Barnett, *The Heart of India,* Wisdom of the East, London, 1908; R. S. Dineschandra, *Literature of Modern Bengal,* Calcutta, 1917; and for a modern believer's point of view, Ananda Acharya's *Brahmadarsanam or Intuition of the Absolute,* New York, 1911. For Christian parallels, see W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism,* Oxford, 1913. In *Mysticism and Logic,* New York, 1918, Bertrand Russell has shown the logical weakness underlying the mystic's position.

and can create a double of himself; but these *iddhis* belong to all Yoga experience.

Third. In the scientific Yoga, apart from similar magic, the mystic becomes illumined by freeing himself as spirit from matter. Here also there is no union; on the contrary, isolation is sought; and it is found by devotion or mainly by certain exercises, both giving intuition surpassing reason.

In the fourth sort of mysticism, the mystic obtains intuition of the world-consciousness and of himself as a part of it.

Finally, the fifth or emotional mystic discards philosophy for an emotional thrill of union with the divine imaged as a specific form of divinity.

# THE MYSTICISM OF JESUS

GEORGE AARON BARTON

To some it may seem irreverent to speak of the mysticism of Jesus at all. Such may naturally say: "Jesus is one with the Father. Mysticism is a form of human religion. How can he have part or lot in it?" A little reflection should convince any in whose minds this thought arises that the objection that they feel is not valid. If there was in Jesus an incarnation of God, Jesus possessed nevertheless a real humanity. His was a human psychology; he shared our human experiences. If this were not so, the incarnation would be unreal. We may then without irreverence, even from the most orthodox point of view, proceed to investigate the life of Jesus with a view of discovering the mystical elements in it.

What, however, do we mean by mysticism? Previous speakers in this course have doubtless defined it, but, as I have not had the privilege of hearing their definitions, I cannot be guided by them. In the interest of clearness, therefore, I must tell you how I shall use the term. The word "mysticism" has been employed to denote all sorts of abnormal states and abnormal experiences. It accordingly suggests to many the irrational and grotesque in religion. If this were mysticism, then it would be necessary to say at the start that Jesus was no mystic, for, in spite of the efforts of such writers as De Loosten,[1] Hirsch,[2] and Binet-

[1] *Jesus Christus vom Standpunkt des Psychiaters,* Bamberg, 1905.
[2] *Religion und Zivilisation vom Standpunkt des Psychiaters,* Munich, 1908.

Sanglé [3] to make out Jesus a paranoiac, no more sane personality than his appears in the annals of mankind.

"Mysticism," says Granger, "is that attitude of mind which divines and moves toward the spiritual in the common things of life, not a partial and occasional operation of the mind under the guidance of far-fetched analogies." Mysticism has also been defined as a "type of religion which is characterized by an immediate consciousness of personal relationship with the Divine." Again mystics are said to have a vivid consciousness of the "Beyond"— one of the vague impersonal terms by which philosophers like to avoid saying "God." Once more mysticism is said to consist of a consciousness that "more than ourselves is impinging on the skirts of our being." If these definitions of mysticism are true, we should expect to find in Jesus the supreme mystic, for it would be difficult to find another whose mind moved as unswervingly as his "toward the spiritual in the common things of life," not partially and occasionally, but as continually and steadily as the needle points to the pole. Jesus called the "Beyond"—"the more than ourselves that impinges on the skirts of our being"—"Father," and it is a truth concerning him, though it has become a commonplace to say it, that his consciousness of immediate communion with the Father surpassed that of other men. It was the atmosphere of his life; the inspiration of all his efforts; his refreshment when weary. These, however, are statements proof of which will be submitted below.

Before taking up that proof, it is necessary to say a word concerning the sources of our knowledge of Jesus. In speaking to a group of well-trained theological students, it is unnecessary to take time to explain why one does not employ the Gospel of John as a source. It is a later interpretation of the nature of Jesus, not an authentic biography of him. As

[3] *La folie de Jesus,* Paris, 1910, 1911. Per contra, see, A. Schweitzer, *Expositor,* Ser. 8, vol. vi, 328 ff., 439 ff., 554 ff.

one of the first great theological interpretations of him, it is magnificent, but the Jesus depicted here moves across the pages, not as one who shares the pains and mystical inspirations of our humanity, but as a heavenly Being from another sphere. This is true, even if we recognize, as the writer does, that in some respects the Fourth Gospel reflects the mind and spirit of Jesus better than the Synoptics. Its author's exalted conception of the deity of Christ blinded his eyes to the mystical experiences which the Master shared with humanity. The sources of information for our subject are, accordingly, the Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels, however, themselves rest upon sources, and concerning these sources there are contending theories. According to the most widely accepted theory two main sources underlie Matthew and Luke. They are Mark (or an Ur-Marcus) and Q. According to Professor Burton's theory, which appeals more to me, there are five sources, Mark, the Logia of Matthew, a Galilean document, and two Peraean documents. The question of analysis, however, will not seriously affect our discussion. Whichever of the two views of the sources one holds, most of the passages that come into consideration in estimating the mysticism of Jesus can be traced back to a very early date. This is especially true, if one admits, as I am compelled to do, that the arguments of Harnack and Torrey by which the date of the Book of Acts is pushed back to 63 A. D. are valid. In that case the Gospel of Luke cannot have been written later than 60–61 A. D., and the Gospel of Mark and the other sources would be still earlier.[4]

Bearing these remarks in mind, let us see what our sources have to say of the mysticism of Jesus. The earliest indication of a mystical tendency in Jesus comes to us from the "infancy" narrative of Luke — a source outside all the

[4] This early date of the Synoptic Gospels has not yet been generally accepted by New Testament scholars.

main documents enumerated above. If the Gospel was written not later than the early part of 61 A. D., the document must have been composed not more than thirty years from the crucifixion. The event narrated is said, however, to have occurred when Jesus was twelve years old. The evidence for it cannot, therefore, be called contemporary. There is about the narrative, nevertheless, a verisimilitude, an appropriateness, a consonance with the later habits and character of Jesus, that lead one to accord it a high degree of credibility. I refer, of course, to the words of Jesus uttered when his parents, finding him in the Temple, reproved him for having stayed behind alone in Jerusalem, when they set out for home. "Did you not know," said Jesus, "that I must be in the things of my Father?" You do not need to be reminded that interpreters differ as to the meaning of his words. Some take "in the things of my Father" to refer to the Temple, and so understand the boy to say in substance: "It is strange that you should be at a loss where to look for me! Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house?" According to this interpretation, the mystical feeling of the youthful Jesus is very manifest. Not many boys of twelve have been so conscious of the Fatherhood of God as to linger joyfully in temple or church after the family have gone home from sheer gladness to be in the Father's house! The more familiar interpretation of the phrase is, however, conveyed in the rendering of the Authorized Version: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" If this be the meaning, the words are still witness to a unique mysticism on the part of the youthful Jesus, for his words betray an "attitude of mind which divines and moves towards the spiritual." The joy of the spiritual fascinated him, and so absorbed his thought that he remained behind in the Temple with strangers.

If any doubt attaches to the historicity of the narrative

just considered, none whatever attaches to the account of the baptism of Jesus. It forms a part of the Gospel of Mark, one of our earliest sources, and was regarded as so important that each of the other Gospels repeated it. It forms a part of what Professor Bacon twenty years ago happily denominated the autobiography of Jesus.[5] I am not sure but that Bacon has since changed his mind about the matter, but, even if he has, in my judgment his cogent argument stands. At the time that Jesus drew forth from Peter, in the retirement at Cæsarea Philippi, the confession "Thou art the Christ," Jesus himself drew aside for a little the veil of his inner life and recounted enough of his experience at the Baptism and Temptation, so that they could understand on what, in his own soul, the Messianic claim rested. The account of the Baptism and Temptation is then autobiographical material. According to the earliest form of this narrative:

> "Straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him: and a voice came out of the heavens, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.'"

These words clearly record an experience of Jesus.[6] It was Jesus who saw the Spirit descending; it was Jesus who heard the voice saying: "Thou art my beloved Son." After the manner of Oriental speech, the language clearly describes in objective terms an experience in the soul of Jesus. This experience, was, however, so intense that Jesus heard the voice speaking. Writers on mysticism tell us that, "In many instances, especially with persons of peculiar psychical

[5] "The Autobiography of Jesus," in the *American Journal of Theology,* II, 1898, pp. 527–560.

[6] The labored argument of writers like Nathaniel Schmidt, *Prophet of Nazareth,* New York, 1905, p. 262 ff., by which it is attempted to show that all this material is invention, is peculiarly unconvincing.

disposition, the mystical experience is attended with unusual phenomena, such as automatic voices or visions, profound body changes, swoons, or ecstasies. These physical phenomena are, however, only the more intense and excessive resonances and reverberations which in milder degree accompany all psychical processes." [7]

From the point of view of healthy-minded experts on mysticism this passage in Mark records a great mystical experience of Jesus. It marked the point when his earlier profound but not fully developed consciousness of intimate relations with that Great Beyond that we call God reached an epoch-making point in its development, and he realized that he was in a unique sense the Son of God, and that, whatever the real content of the Messianic expectations of the seers of his race might be, it was his mission to fulfill them. When one pictures to himself what such Messianic expectations as those set forth in the Enoch Parables (Enoch, chapters 46 and 48) meant to the devout Jew, what visions of exalted destiny, of preëxistence, and of future mission they must have evoked — when, also, one considers what the fine and sensitive psychical organization of Jesus must have been, one realizes a little the intensity of the experience that was his at the moment of his baptism. No wonder that his eye seemed to see a vision, and his ear to hear a voice!

For the events which followed, we still have the authority of the autobiography, for the account of the Temptation is a part of the autobiography. The narrative of the Temptation formed, according to one school of critics, a part of the document Q; according to another, a part of G, or the Galilean document. In either case it was a part of an evangel which was composed but little, if any, later than the Gospel of Mark, and its historical value is as good.

It has been assumed above that the unique sonship of God of which Jesus became conscious at the Baptism carried with

[7] *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics,* IX, 1917, p. 84.

it a realization that he was the Messiah. This is conceded by most writers on the subject,[8] for it was in accord with Old Testament usage. In the Old Testament the king was the Messiah, the Anointed one, and the king is several times called "son of God"; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 82:6. While the statement of Sanday is no doubt true, that for Jesus the term is far from being exhausted by the holding of a certain office, or the fulfilling of certain functions, such as those of the Messiah — that it means for him the perfection of sonship in relation to God — it doubtless included the Messiahship, and at the moment of the experience the functions of the Messiahship appear to have been uppermost in the thought of Jesus. It was necessary for him to adjust himself to these hoary expectations of the Jewish people before he could center his thought upon the other far-reaching implications of the term.

For this purpose he withdrew alone into the wilderness to think. At first his thoughts were so absorbing that he forgot entirely the demands of the body. From this intense reverie he was at last awakened by the rude pangs of hunger. At first the fact that he could still hunger startled him. Apocalyptists had pictured the Messianic age as a time of unimaginable material plenty. It was to be inaugurated by a great feast. Could he who, alone in a barren wilderness, was famishing without even a scrap of food really be the Messiah? Such was the meaning of the first temptation. Then came the suggestion, "Command this stone that it become bread." Every wilderness in Palestine is full of stones. The Messiah was a heavenly being. The age in which Jesus lived believed that every real prophet, even, could work miracles. Natural laws were hardly known; men lived in an Arabian-Nights

[8] *Cf.* N. Schmidt, "Son of God," *Encyclopædia Biblica;* W. Sanday, "Son of God in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible;* J. Stalker, "Son of God" in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels;* B. W. Bacon, *Jesus The Son of God,* New Haven, 1911, p. 29 ff.

world. The suggestion was most natural. With this insight into the heart of things that characterizes Jesus always, he repelled this suggestion. His mind reverted to the statement of Deut. 8:3: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh." In other words Jesus centered his thought in this initial meditation upon his Messianic mission, not on material things — bread, feasts, material miracles — but upon the fact that real sonship consists in doing the will of God. The Messiahship, as he viewed it, consisted, not in miraculously escaping the common lot, but in doing the will of God. The Messianic mission was not to enable men to escape the common lot by living in a world where "on one vine would be a thousand branches, and each branch would produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster would produce a thousand grapes, and each grape would produce a cor of wine," [9] but to enable them to do the will of God in the world of perplexity, difficulty, and struggle in which they now live.

When these thoughts had passed through the mind of Jesus, there was presented to him, according to the Gospel of Luke (I believe the order of the Temptations in Luke is the true psychological order), a further problem as to the kind of Messiah he would be. According to the Messianic expectations of his race, the Messiah was to rule a world-wide domain. Before the mind's eye of Jesus the kingdoms of the world passed in review. The graphic language of the Gospel represents the devil as saying to him: "To thee will I give all this authority and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall be thine." What does this language mean? We shall not, I believe, go far astray, if we understand it to mean that the temptation was presented to Jesus to proclaim himself the

[9] Apocalypse of Baruch, 29:5.

kind of Messiah the Jews were expecting, and to seek world-dominion by force of arms. The ancient world had been for centuries a scene of slaughter and plunder. There were no international ethics. However much some Babylonian and Egyptian kings may have sought to establish justice within their own borders, the invasion and plunder, the subjugation and pillage of other countries had been a praiseworthy procedure for every monarch whose energy demanded an outlet. To some, such pillage had been a regular trade. The cruelties practiced on such raids were limited only by the fertility of the imaginations of the conquerors and the scientific knowledge at their disposal. Force had ruled. Might made right. All the great empires had been built up on this basis. What that means for mankind, the Germans have, in these past years, made us vividly to realize. For his Messianic kingdom, the Jew had conceived no other basis than force. Such justice as it would mete out was probably in his thought usually limited to members of his own race. Was this the kind of kingdom for Jesus to establish? He knew that thousands of Jews would gladly rally to his standard, if he would but unfurl the banner of the Messiah, and that they would shed their last drop of blood to win world-empire. This was the natural, the easy way. Along this path lay popularity, glory, and revenge upon century-old enemies.

The vision tempted even Jesus for one brief moment, then he put it aside. Such unethical employment of force would be serving Satan. It could establish no kingdom of God. At the best it would but gain the mastery over the bodies of men, while every soul worthy of the name would seethe with hatred and rebellion. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only thou shalt serve," was the thought that prevailed in his mind. That is, Thou shalt love and reverence justice, kindness, unselfishness, or rather the One who embodies all these. Thou shalt give thy life to establish kindness, fairness, unselfishness, and love in the hearts of

men. Thou shalt be a Messiah to establish a spiritual kingdom, in which the souls of men shall be attached to their sovereign by the adamantine chains of affection, not by force of arms. It shall be a little heaven of peace; not a hell of hatred and intrigue.

This choice on the part of Jesus banished the possibility of a career of outward glory, and imposed upon him the humbler rôle of an ethical teacher. We can now see that ultimately it involved the choice of the cross, though there is some reason to think that the cross was not then consciously present to the mind of Jesus.

The last of the temptations of Jesus — the temptation to cast himself down from a pinnacle or wing of the Temple — has been considered by some scholars as too fantastic to be historical. Grant if you please, that the form in which it is stated seems fantastic to us, the temptation was, if we are not mistaken, a very natural one, and the most subtle of all. Half of the pleasure of holding a prominent position is, to most men, the fact that their fellows know it and honor one for it. Closely interwoven with the Messianic expectations was the conception that men would honor the Messiah and stand in awe of him. He was to come on the clouds of heaven; every eye was to see him. The choice that Jesus had just made put all that behind him, but, if we may believe the record, Jesus was human enough so that for one brief moment human admiration and applause made an appeal even to him. Might he not, after all, do something spectacular, that would give God an opportunity publicly to show in a miraculous way that Jesus was his Son, so that men might marvel, stand in awe, and do reverence? This is what the temptation really means. Jesus, however, repelled the thought with another, again taken from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt not tempt (or make trial of) the Lord thy God." The appropriateness of this Deuteronomic quotation may not at first be obvious to every

reader. Its aptness lies in the fact that to go into unnecessary danger that God might deliver him was really to create an artificial situation to put God to the test. Some of us have known people who were always putting our friendship to the test by such means. For example, in walking with us they may drop behind to see whether we care enough for them to stop and wait. They are always creating artificial situations in order to put our friendship or love to the test. They are constantly putting us to trial, or, in the good old English meaning of the word, "tempting" us. The mainspring of all such conduct lies in part in an exaggerated self-consciousness, and in part in lurking doubts of one's friends. When for one brief moment the desire for spectacular fame and applause tempted Jesus, he repelled the thought by a recognition of its real character. He did not doubt God; he would not put God to the test. He would take the prosaic, even the tragic path of humble duty, and leave God to vindicate his choice to men in his own time and way. Thus his mystic insight into the nature of God and his communion with him led him to an appreciation of values that would make uniquely appropriate to him the words of Alexander Smith:

> I've learned to prize the quiet lightning-deed,
> Not the applauding thunder at its heels,
> Which men call Fame.

I have dwelt thus long on the experience of Jesus at his Baptism and Temptation, because it illustrates most clearly the reality of his mystic experience, and also the fundamental way in which inrushes of conscious correspondence with the "Beyond" shaped the course of his choices, his ministry, and his teaching.

Such an interpretation of these narratives is, for our time, analogous to that which, for his time, St. Paul made. In Phil. 2: 5–11 he makes a running comparison between the

temptation of Adam and the Temptation of Christ. Adam, made in the image of God, was tempted to become like God, yielded to the temptation, and lost his Eden. Jesus, being in the form of God, says St. Paul, "counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped," but . . . "humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death." . . . "*Wherefore* also God highly exalted him and gave unto him the name that is above every name." This last statement is more bold than a modern theologian would dare to make. It implies, when the Jewish language of Paul is put into modern phrase, that Jesus, in consequence of the choices made at the time of the Temptation, under the illumination of his mystic experience, won his deity. It is well known that in Jewish thought the *name* summed up the attributes of deity.[10]

In telling his disciples of his experiences at the Baptism and during the Temptation Jesus drew aside the veil from his inner life to an unusual degree. Ordinarily during his ministry he was too intent on making the Father known to men to speak of himself. Nevertheless there are two or three occasions on record during his later ministry when we can detect the evidences of mystic experience.

Before speaking of these, we should pause to note Jesus' habit of prayer. On two occasions after days of exhausting work with multitudes — one in Capernaum, when Simon's mother-in-law was healed; the other after the five thousand were fed — we find Jesus withdrawing to a solitude to pray. (Cf. Mark 1:35; 6:46; Matt. 14:23; Luke 5:16; 6:12.) During the labor of ministry he had apparently depleted, so he felt, his spiritual resources, and consequently sought opportunity to be alone with the Father, that, by mystic communion, the fountains of energy might be replenished.

Another definite occasion, in the account of which we can detect the marks of mystical experience on the part of Jesus,

[10] See Lev. 24:11 and the Talmud *passim*.

was the Transfiguration. The accounts of the Transfiguration are, as we have them, a mixture of what Jesus experienced, what the disciples saw, and the inferences which they made from what they saw. Probably those inferences led them to heighten in some respects what they actually beheld, as memory placed their vision in new perspective.

The occasion was a crisis in the ministry of Jesus. After months of association with his disciples as a great Teacher, during which he had called himself the Son of Man, a term which concealed his Messianic claim, while it had in it also the potentialities of revealing it, he retired with the disciples to Cæsarea Philippi in order that, withdrawn from the crowds, he might prepare them for the future. There he drew from Peter the confession: "Thou art the Messiah," commended Peter for his insight, and later rebuked him for his stupidity and presumption. It was after this, as he contemplated going to Jerusalem to certain death, that he took Peter, James, and John and went up into a mountain to pray. As the disciples gazed and as he was praying "the fashion of his countenance was altered," says Luke. Matthew heightens the statement declaring: "His face did shine as the sun." This has the marks of a mystical experience. "Prayer of illumination, altered face, changed form, glorified figure, radiation of light, have marked many mystics."[11] For the Master himself we may infer, then, that the prayer involved a mystic experience. The outward manifestation of this experience was visible to the disciples.

But what of the other features of the narrative — the appearance of Moses and Elijah? It has long seemed to the writer that this part of the account represents a psychological experience on the part of the disciples. They had but recently recognized his Messiahship, and they are now led in their thought to associate him with Moses and Elijah, the two great heroes of their national history. Perhaps their

[11] *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics,* IX, 89 b.

thought was helped to this by the transfigured appearance of his face, which suggested the shining of the face of Moses as he came down from the mountain (cf. Ex. 34: 29–35). Thus they put Jesus as the Messiah, in thinking of him, in proper perspective. It seems probable that in thinking of him in this new perspective they gradually extended the shining of his face till they thought of his garments as shining also. Even if it be true that the narrative now contains in part a psychological experience of the disciples, it also contains a historical mystical experience of Jesus.

Another saying of Jesus, that in Matt. 11: 25–27, points to a mystical experience. As the text stands it indicates that at a definite point of time Jesus realized the functions of a revealer of God to men which his sonship imposed upon him. This point of time apparently lay between the Temptation and the Transfiguration. The passage runs:

"At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any man know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

You will remember that following these words is Jesus' invitation "Come unto me all ye that labor. . . . Take my yoke upon you."

This passage has been a sort of storm-center of discussion in recent years. It is the only passage in the Synoptic narratives in which the Father and Son are contrasted in a manner somewhat like that of the Fourth Gospel. Of course to writers of the point of view of Nathaniel Schmidt the passage is unhistorical.[12] They cannot conceive Jesus as entertaining a conception of God's Fatherhood or of his

[12] Cf. *Prophet of Nazareth,* New York, p. 151 ff.

own Sonship that was at all unique. Notwithstanding the doubts of such writers, the attestation of the passage proves it to have been a part of one of the early pre-synoptic sources. At least that is true of verses 25–27. According to Burton's school of criticism[13] this passage formed a part of the first Perean Document; according to the prevailing school, it was a logion from Q, a source as old as or older than the substratum of Mark. Harnack has subjected the text to a searching analysis,[14] and recognizes that it was a genuine part of Q except the words which place the Son and Father in a unique relation to each other. These were, he thinks, due to the compiler of our first Gospel,— an opinion the arguments for which do not seem convincing. Since the *Logion* occurs in Luke 10:21, 22, and there includes these words, it is but fair to assume that they were a part of Q or of P', or of the early document, by whatever name we call it. Any doubt as to this is purely subjective and not supported by external evidence.

But even if the saying occurred in Q (or P') this, in the minds of many, does not prove that these words come from Jesus. Allen in the *International Critical Commentary* claims that there is an undoubted dependence of the words in Matt. 11:25–30 on Ecclus. 51, and gives a list of phrases that occur in both texts that is very striking.[15] He was not the first to note this, and others have made much more of it than he. Loisy and Montefiore erect upon this basis, fortified by some other parallels from the Synoptics, the theory that these are not words of Jesus at all, but a sort of early Christian hymn, in which Jesus is exalted by identifying him with the eternal Wisdom, who alone knows God fully.[16]

[13] *Cf.* D. R. Wickes, *The Sources of Luke's Perean Section,* Chicago, 1912, p. 67 f.

[14] *Sprüche und Reden Jesu,* Leipsig, 1907, p. 18 f., 200–216.

[15] *Commentary on Matthew,* New York, 1907, p. 124.

[16] *Cf. A. Loisy, Les evangiles synoptiques,* Paris, 1907, p. 91, n. 3,

It must be said, however, that possible as this view appears, it does not impress one who puts Matt. 11:25–30 and Ecclus. 51 side by side and reads them in connection. Sirach's thanksgiving and praise to God are in a vein so different from the words of Jesus under consideration, that it can only be said that, if the *logion* in Matthew consciously quotes his words, the quotation was made by a genius so much greater than Sirach that he created a new and much more beautiful whole. To the question of the identification of Jesus with the Divine Wisdom we shall return in a moment.

It is not so certain, however, that Ben Sirach furnished the intellectual ancestry of the passage. Pfleiderer had regarded it as an adumbration of Paulineism, believing it to have been suggested by I Cor. 15:25–27.[17] Bacon, on the other hand, finds the literary ancestry of the passage in Isaiah 29:9–24.[18] These opinions indicate that there are many possibilities, if literary ancestry is to be traced.

If, however, the passage is from Q (or P′) the question remains to be determined whether it represents the words of Jesus or is a free composition of the author of the document. Wellhausen holds the words "no man knoweth the Father but the Son" to be an interpolation[19] — apparently made by the author of the document. It must be said, however, that if the words are a part of Q (or P′) and if we are compelled to push back the date of the Synoptic Gospels to the time indicated above, the document must have been composed within a decade or two of the Crucifixion. If there is any relation between this *logion* and Paul, Paul might more easily be dependent on the document than the document on him. Suppose one were to grant that in the *logion* the Son is conceived somewhat after the manner of

and *The Gospel and the Church,* New York, 1909, pp. 93–96, and Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels,* London, 1909, p. 606.

[17] *Unchristentum,* Berlin, 1888, p. 445.

[18] *Jesus the Son of God,* New Haven, 1911, pp. 7, 8.

[19] *Das Evangelium Matthaei,* Berlin, 1904, p. 57 f.

the Divine Wisdom in later pre-Christian Judaism, there is abundant evidence that these conceptions were as accessible in the third and fourth decades of the first century as in the seventh or the ninth.[20] If the writer of Q (or P') sought to bring Jesus into relation with Wisdom as early as the third or fourth decade of the first century, one has a right to ask, what led him to do this? Would he be likely to do it, if there had been no authority for it in the reported sayings of Jesus himself? Is it not more probable, if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, that his own consciousness was brought into relief against the background of the Wisdom speculations just as it was against the background of the Messianic speculations than that it should have occurred so early to a Christian disciple to consider Jesus as Wisdom incarnate? Surely later Christian belief that the hypostases of Wisdom and Word were incarnate in Jesus must have had some starting point, and, if we can trace it back to within a decade of Jesus, it appears to be more fitting to consider the *logion* as genuine, to find that starting point in Jesus' own consciousness, and to take this passage as reflecting a genuine experience of his.

To this conclusion J. Rendel Harris has apparently recently come.[21] In thus treating the passage as a genuine word of Jesus, we follow in the footsteps of so thorough and untheological a writer as Oscar Holtzmann.[22] If the words are words of Jesus they represent an enlargement of his consciousness of his mission due, apparently, to that intensifying of the powers which mystic communion with that Father, whom psychologists delight to call the "Beyond" gives. "At that time"— some definite moment of experience the

[20] For a statement of the pre-Christian Jewish conception of the Divine Wisdom see Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums in neutestamentlichen Zeitalter,* Berlin, 1903, pp. 336–350.

[21] See his *Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel,* Cambridge, 1917, pp. 57–62.

[22] See his *Life of Jesus,* London, 1904, p. 284.

date of which is unknown to us — Jesus experienced such union with the Father and became conscious of such unique knowledge of him, that he realized in a new way that his person was the instrument of the revelation of the Father to men.

One other experience in the life of Jesus remains to be considered, his agony in Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 36 ff.; Mark 14: 32 ff.; Lu. 22: 39 ff.). In the shadow of the shameful death that was impending he prayed; "and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." This agony of sweat is declared to be psychologically true to nature and to bear the genuine marks of the mystic experience.[23] The agony was great, but communion with the Father in prayer brought the needed relief. Into the soul of Jesus came peace and his spirit was flooded with calm strength. Thus through communion with the "Beyond" he gained strength for the supreme act of devotion, and went with quiet power to face the cross which sums up in itself the tragedy of the ages. One other experience of Jesus — that upon the cross — should, perhaps, be brought into connection with that in Gethsamane. In Mark and Matthew we are told that Jesus cried with a loud voice: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15: 34; Matt. 27: 46). Apparently this was an agony of prayer like that in Gethsemane, only still more intense. In mortal agony, as the moment of dissolution approached, he missed for a moment that mystic sense of the environing Father that had so often sustained him in moments of lesser trial. The agonizing cry seems to have reëstablished the mystic communion which made him once more master of himself. Mark and Matthew tell us (Mark 15: 37; Matt. 27: 50), that a little later Jesus cried with a loud voice again, and yielded up his spirit, though they do not tell us what he

[23] *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics,* IX, p. 89.

said. Luke tells us (Luke 23:46) that his words on this occasion were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Fourth evangelist transforms them (John 19:30) into: "It is finished." Since Luke is the earlier Gospel and is not pervaded by the theological presuppositions of John, we may here follow Luke. It would seem, then, that the agonized cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" may well be understood as a cry for the reëstablishment of a sense of God's mystic presence at the moment of supreme need, and that the calm commending of his spirit to the Father bears witness that that God in whom he, much more than we do, lived and moved and had his being, became once more to his consciousness the vitalizing atmosphere of his soul.

In conclusion let us remind ourselves that Jesus speaks little of himself, and that the occasions when we can detect in his life experiences that may be studied as "mystic," if we take the word to mean some remarkable inrush of vitalizing power from the Beyond, are few indeed. It is only on four or five occasions that the veil is for a moment drawn aside from his inner life. These glimpses, however, reveal to us the secret of his strength.

The depth of his moral insight, his certainty of God, the clearness with which he read human motives and human needs, his sympathy with nature and his understanding of it, and above all his own inner purity, strength, and unselfish love — qualities which make him unique among men — all indicate that many such mystic experiences were his and that from that great "Beyond" that the theologian calls God he constantly drew the nurture that made these qualities possible.

It would be more correct to say that experiences which, in the great mystics are occasional only, constituted the normal state of Jesus' consciousness. What in the best of his disciples have been rare moments to be cherished in memory

appear to have been in him the warp and woof of daily life. He saw truth and God. These he knew, apparently, not by processes of reasoning and logic, but by vision. He illustrated his own beatitude concerning the pure in heart — he *saw* God. This is a quality, possessed in lesser degree, to be sure, but still possessed by the greatest mystics. For them, too, truth is a matter, not of reasoning, but of vision. If one cannot perceive truth in a like immediate way, the mystic has no adequate argument with which to persuade him — nothing but the authority of his own insight. How characteristic this was of Jesus his hearers noted early in his ministry. "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29).

This note of immediacy and authority is found on nearly every page of the Synoptic Gospels. Two or three examples are: "Even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:17); "The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed" (Matt. 13:31); "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God?" (Luke 12:6). These are but examples. Many more will readily occur to every reader.

Whatever the topic, the discourse of Jesus moved in this realm of immediate vision, which only the mystic approaches. It would appear, then, that, although we can trace certain moments of crises in the mystic experiences of Jesus, the great characteristic of his mysticism was his continual living in the atmosphere of the "Beyond."

In other words, in Jesus the mystic experience was not unusual, but constant and normal. Jesus was the master-mystic of the ages. No personality known to us has drawn from the Infinite so much of all that is lovely, inspiring, and creative as he. To view Jesus as a mystic is to gain a view of his personality through some of the favorite concepts of our age,— a view which interprets to us afresh those quali-

ties in him that made the men who had the privilege of contact with him realize that, as never before, they had come near to God.

# THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF ST. PAUL

BENJAMIN WISNER BACON

## § 1. *The Previous Question*

Preliminary to the question of the psychologist: What were the experiences of the author considered? lies the question of the critic: What are our sources of information? Even in the case of contemporaries it makes a difference whether the record which serves as our basis of judgment be derived at first or second hand; and if we are so fortunate as to possess the mystic's own account of his experience it still is a matter of greatest moment whether the record was prepared for the purpose to which the scientific investigator puts it. It may be, conceivably, a dispassionate report of calm self-scrutiny, or again it may be an indignant polemic, a protest again slander, a rhapsody of ecstatic feeling. If the author be writing for scientific purposes we may treat his utterances accordingly. We must use a different kind of interpretation if he writes as a religious enthusiast, passionately conscious of the inadequacy of language, and eagerly availing himself of more or less conventionalized forms and symbols of devout imagination.

When in addition the attempt is made to overleap the gap of well-nigh two millenniums in time, and the culture and civilization of a non-Aryan race, the need of historical criticism, and of historical interpretation, becomes ten-fold more apparent, as a preliminary to any judgment worth having concerning the mystical "experiences" of an author.

If anything were lacking to prove the necessity of such preliminary enquiry it would be supplied by a recent example[1] of uncritical procedure, in which what is called "psychological criticism" is applied to the character and teaching of Jesus in much the same way that one might apply it to that of Moses from the Pentateuch, David from the Psalms, or Isaiah from the composite literature covering several centuries that has attached itself to the prophet's name.

Not that a real and genuine "psychological criticism" might not be serviceable if ultimately applied even to these dim, majestic figures of the past. Not that it is inapplicable even in the case of Jesus, difficult as it is for the historical and literary critic to determine the precise nature of his teaching and outline of his career. But the preliminary studies are not wanting. We have a whole literature devoted to the "Messianic Consciousness of Jesus." And in this valuable literature the specific problem of the "Eschatology" of Jesus, or his conception of his relation to the Coming Age of world-renewal, takes the fore-front of the discussion. Such "psychological criticism" is both inevitable, and (if conducted competently, in a spirit of reverence and devotion to the truth) is even ardently to be desired. For what do we mean by "knowing" and "appreciating" the spirit of Jesus, if not bringing it into nearest practicable relation to the spirit of men of his own times, such as John the Baptist and Paul, of the great leaders of Israel's religious past, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, and so (by this same road of comparison) into relation with men of our own times and ultimately with our own consciousness. Such "psychological criticism" we admit to be both inevitable and necessary. But those who have made real contributions in this field, the Schenkels, Baldenspergers, Wredes,

[1] G. Stanley Hall, *Jesus Christ in the Light of Psychology,* vols. I and II, New York, 1917.

Schweitzers, Sandays, Winstanleys and others, did not begin to build at the top of the chimney. They sought first of all as competent critics and philologians to know the nature and relative value of the documents on which they relied for their data, and the meaning of the language employed, and thus laid a foundation.

In the case of St. Paul there is more immediate reason for the application of a modest and methodical " psychological criticism " than in the case of his great Master. For whereas the very fact of any mystical experience of Jesus is widely open to question, Paul explicitly and emphatically proclaims it in his own case. At the same time there is also greater hope of useful results. For psychological analysis is obviously more practicable where the basis of study is a body of admittedly authentic writings by the character to be studied, rather than a body of anonymous, undated narratives, extremely diverse in character and notoriously difficult to harmonize, as to which we can be sure of almost nothing beyond the fact that not one word was written by the subject himself, and that their very language is only his in translation.

As it is, the psychologist, expert or inexpert, has not waited to ask whether in the case of Paul his enquiry was practicable and promising or not. The very necessity of the case demands it. Every apologist for the Christian faith, since the Apostle himself answered to Festus for his own rationality, finds it necessary to treat of Paul's mystical experiences. We have no other direct and well authenticated attestation of the central facts of our religion, no other first-hand witness to the resurrection faith. No wonder then that we have scores, if not hundreds, of attempts, more or less satisfactory according as they are based on a wider or narrower foundation of kindred observed phenomena, to classify, interpret, explain, make intelligible, that religious experience of Paul which centers upon his conversion. Historically the

rock foundation of the Church was the new birth of Peter's faith, when the gates of Sheol were found to have yielded to the Prince of life. But Peter has left us no record of his experience. For Christian apologetic the starting-point must be that vision of the glorified Jesus which gave to Paul his apostleship and his gospel in one.

The reason for this central importance of the mystical experience of Paul is not far to seek; but it is so commonly forgotten or ignored that I may venture to remind you of the facts. Not only are the Pauline Epistles by much the oldest New Testament writings, antedating by half a generation the most ancient of extant Gospels, they are actually the only admittedly apostolic record that we possess. Only one of the writings attributed by church tradition to the Apostle John contains the name of the reputed author, and that is Revelation, the most violently disputed of all from the very beginning. Matthew is admittedly not apostolic in its present form. Of the many writings purporting to be the work of Peter, only one, the so-called First Epistle, has claims to authenticity which are generally deemed worthy of serious consideration; and what First Peter contains that is not borrowed from Paul is a quantity so minute as to be almost imperceptible. Outside Paul, then, there are no writings of admitted apostolicity, and Paul himself was not an Apostle in that sense of the word which most appeals to the secular historian. But he is our only first-hand witness for the ultimate facts of gospel story.

I do not by any means wish to be understood as implying that without Paul we should know nothing about the character, teaching and career of Jesus, and of the origins of the Church. Quite the contrary. By far the larger part of our knowledge comes from sources independent of Paul. But all this independent knowledge would lose its most indispensable support and guarantee, were it not for the datable, signed, and superbly authenticated Pauline Epistles. When,

therefore, it becomes a question of establishing so vital a fact of our religion as the appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples, it would be hopeless to try to establish anything without the testimony of First Corinthians, the best authenticated of all the writings of the New Testament, a writing (I think it safe to say) as well authenticated as any of classical antiquity.

As we know, Paul correlates his own experience with that of all the other witnesses of the resurrection in I Cor. 15: 1–11, a survey of the testimony quite adequate for the purpose, but completely different from the story told in any one of the Gospels, and having scarcely a point of contact with theirs. As between Paul's record and that of Synoptic story no historian could hesitate for a moment. We are all familiar with the often quoted declaration that the testimony of the Gospels to the data of the resurrection story would suffice to establish the fact in any court of law. The statement is made by one among other writers who counts the training of a lawyer among his many qualifications. And yet even a child should perceive its harmful exaggeration. It might perhaps be true if the Gospels were the signed and sealed deposition of competent first-hand witnesses. As it is, they are unsigned, undated reports gathered forty or more years after the event, dependent on unknown sources at several, perhaps many, removes from the eye-witnesses. What would such documents be worth without the corroborative evidence of at least one eye-witness? The authenticated record of Paul is not only by far the oldest testimony, not only is he the only witness who comes forward with the definite statement *"I saw"*; it is his statement which supports and authenticates all the rest. It is his statement, therefore, by reference to which the concurrent tradition must also be weighed, valued and understood.

Because there can be neither rational defense of the fundamental truths of Christianity, nor historically adequate

explanation of its origin, without consideration (as scientific as the conditions allow) of the religious experience of Paul, there is no lack in number of such treatises. The whole history of apologetics teems with them, from the Book of Acts, with its thrice-repeated narrative of Paul's conversion, down to the present day. The great majority of these accounts are as innocent of scientific criticism as they are of scientific psychology. They have the fault which is no less conspicuous in the traditional apologist than in the self-appointed champion of " psychological criticism." They do not verify their data. Now the modern apologist is quite awake to the uselessness of invoking the ghost of canonical infallibility. No appeal to inerrant inspiration will excuse him from the task of authentication of his sources. Nor can the " psychological critic " be excused. He too must face the question whether the data on which he bases his inferences with regard to Paul are drawn from an anonymous writer of unknown date, repeating for apologetic or homiletic purposes, with variations far from easy to reconcile, a story which has come to him from no one knows what sources, and by what channels; or whether, on the contrary, they are drawn from the very words of Paul himself in his best authenticated epistles.

For reasons already sufficiently set forth, psychological criticism in this field is indispensable. Shall we, then, have a William James, superadding his knowledge of contemporary religious psychology to the knowledge of the historians and philological experts familiar with the literature of Hellenistic religious mysticism, building upon the work of historical and literary critics competent to decide most points of documentary testimony? Or shall we continue the type of architecture which begins building at the top, ignoring the whole work of biblical scholarship? For in recent years there have been many able attempts to bring Acts and the Pauline Epistles into right relations with one another and

with their environment, important developments of philology and literary criticism, which have shed new floods of light on the meaning of Paul's own mystical language by comparing it with that of contemporary religious mysticism.

### § 2. *Letters vs. Tradition*

In several instances the biblical writings furnish instructive contrasts between the religious author and leader, living before us in the beacon light of his own impassioned message, and the same individual as depicted in later tradition and legend. From the account of Isaiah's life work in the Book of Kings we should obtain almost no inkling of the true grandeur of the prophet as revealed in the sublime ideals to which his writings are dedicated; just as conversely the Isaian poems exhibit no trace whatever of the externals of wonder-tale related in Kings. The contrast between the Pauline Epistles and the Book of Acts is a closely parallel case. In the Epistles we see the life of Paul from the inside. The mystical experience which made him an Apostle of the faith he had persecuted, and which inspired him with a divine gospel for the world, here shines through on almost every page, although there is nowhere a detailed account of the occurrence. Whenever Paul is defending either his apostleship or his gospel this mystical experience is presupposed. It is the gold background against which any adequate portrait of the missionary and martyr must be painted.

But defense of his apostleship and gospel is the prime motive of the principal writings of Paul. The four "major epistles" (so-called), Galatians, First and Second Corinthians, Romans, the famous four which Baur justly laid down as the unassailable foundation for a constructive criticism of all New Testament literature, are chiefly occupied with precisely this. In Galatians the first two chapters are a defense of Paul's apostleship, beginning with a reference to his conversion (1: 10–17; 2: 7–8). The following

three chapters are a defense of the gospel he had on that occasion received from God.

In Corinthians and Romans the two streams divide. The Corinthian correspondence is largely concerned with the defense of Paul's apostolic authority. In the First Epistle we obtain at intervals glimpses of the opposition which denied it, and repeated references to the vision of the glorified Lord on which it rested (I Cor. 9: 1; 15: 8–9). A much more active and aggressive defense is carried on in the painful "four chapter letter" II Cor. 10: 1–13: 10,[2] while in the latest portion, which seems to include II Cor. 1: 1–9: 15 with exception of the early fragment 6: 14–7: 1,[3] the central theme is a panegyric of the "ministry of the new covenant" (II Cor. 3: 1–6: 10) in which the victorious Apostle looks back over the hard-fought conflict for his divine authority, glorifying the office of "ambassador for God"; he does this, however, not as a matter of concern to himself alone, but on behalf of all conscious like himself of the same divine commission.

As a whole, then, the Corinthian correspondence is occupied with a continuation of the defense of Paul's apostleship begun in Galatians. True his mystical gospel is also vindicated against the *gnosis* of the Apollos party in I Cor. 1: 18–2: 16. It appears again in support of his resurrection doctrine in I Cor. 15: 1–58; II Cor. 4: 7–5: 10. But in the Corinthians Paul's mystical experience appears mainly in defense of his apostleship; the defense of his gospel is incidental. If, then, Gal. 1: 11–17; 2: 7–8 is justly emphasized as giving us in connection with the references already specified in First Corinthians (9: 1; 15: 7–8) our authorita-

[2] Probably taken from the letter referred to as a letter of self-commendation written "with many tears" in II Cor. 2: 3–4; 7: 8–12. Several Corinthian fragments appear to have been combined in "Second" Corinthians.

[3] Perhaps a remnant of the letter urging the church to better discipline in matters of the sex relation referred to in I Cor. 5: 9–13.

tive, first-hand, indisputably authentic corroboration of the story of Paul's conversion related in Acts, the supplementation or corroboration from the Epistles should never be permitted to stop here. The most vital element of all is neglected if (as is usually the case) we fail to associate with the data of Acts, Galatians and First Corinthians the great defense of the "ministry of the new covenant" in II Cor. 3:18–4:6; 5:16–21. For this is Paul's fuller setting forth of what the experience of Apostolic vocation meant to him, and should mean to others. It tells us how and why he felt himself to be "an ambassador for God."

Finally Romans, as has been recognized since the close of the second century,[4] is a systematic exposition of Paul's gospel. Naturally it leaves the now settled question of apostolic authority in the background while interpreting Paul's gospel at greater length than Galatians. But in Rom. 7:7–8:11 we find the same application as in Second Corinthians of Paul's personal mystical experience as the norm and standard. His gospel of life in the Spirit which makes conquest of sin and death is the avowed reflection of his own soul-crisis, and for this reason he employs the first person singular.

Later epistles such as Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians (among which only Ephesians is any longer seriously attacked on the score of authenticity) add elements of value to our understanding of Paul's mystical experience;[5] but even without them we should be adequately informed as to all its essential factors, and the significance which the Apostle himself found in them. For our present purpose, which does not extend beyond the single all-important incident of the vision on the road to Damascus and its implications,

[4] So the Muratorian Fragment (*ca.* 185 A.D), "setting forth at length (prolixius) Christ as primary to all that the scriptures direct."

[5] See e. g. Phil. 3:1–14, 20–21; 7:5–11, and Eph. 3:1–12.

it would suffice if only the four "major epistles" were regarded as authentic, and Ephesians — yes, and even Colossians and Philippians — were treated as deutero-Pauline, subordinated to the rank of secondary reflections of the Apostle's experience and teaching.

The wealth of this first-hand, direct testimony of Paul himself to the inward nature of his mystical experience in the event which gave him both his apostolic calling and his God-taught gospel, is as yet far from adequate appreciation. On the other hand we only tend to obscure it if we over-value the secondary, hearsay accounts of an unknown, anonymous apologist in the Book of Acts. Even were the three more or less conflicting accounts of this later narrative traceable to an eyewitness they could not tell us the really important things. Their portrait would no more nearly correspond to the real Paul than Xenophon's Socrates to the Socrates of Plato. Indeed every thoughtful man must realize upon a mental survey of the book that the author of Acts has no idea of describing the religious experience of Paul, and could not if he would. He tells the story of the transformation of the arch-persecutor of the Church into its most efficient evangelist, and tells it mainly as an evidence of divine intervention to save the brotherhood of the faith. "Luke" (if we adopt the traditional name for this unknown Autor ad Theophilum) takes no pains to harmonize discordant details, and leaves discrepancies of the most flagrant character between his story of Paul's earlier ministry and that given by Paul himself. There has indeed been organized of late years under the leadership of Harnack a somewhat romantic attempt to carry back the Book of Acts to what still appears to me (and certainly not long ago to the great majority of critics) an absurdly early date. Advocates of a high doctrine of Scripture inerrancy have welcomed this dangerous German ally, and our own Professor Torrey, on quite independent, almost purely lin-

guistic grounds has committed himself to a dating even earlier still. But Professor Torrey himself will not maintain that the author of Acts is a good witness to the religious experience of Paul, or that we should do well to rely on his accounts of the Apostle's conversion and early career for anything more than the outline story as it would naturally be reported in the churches through the uncritical medium of pulpit anecdote. The speeches of Acts are such as are composed by the authors of contemporary writings of similar type to fit the occasion described. The speeches placed in Paul's mouth in Acts 17:22–31; 20:18–35; 22:1–21 and 26:1–29 are remarkably fine examples of this Thucydidean art, by a sincere and devout admirer of Paul, but they cannot justly be quoted as on the same level with the letters which they sometimes contradict.[6] They fit their occasions remarkably well, far better, for example, than that of Acts 13:16–41; but if they fitted ten times better than they do, their value for the "psychological criticism" of Paul would still be limited to externalities. They would give us little more than the material framework, the arrest of the persecutor near Damascus by a sudden mental and physical collapse, from which he rose as it were a new man, convinced that the crucified Messiah whose followers he had been persecuting had interposed on their behalf.[7] God

[6] Compare the statement of Acts 24:17 with Rom. 15:25–28, or Acts 22:17–21 and 26:20 with Gal. 1:16–24.

[7] Such is the bearing even of the (Greek) proverb Paul is represented in Acts 26:14 as hearing uttered by Jesus in his vision. Entirely unwarranted inferences have been drawn from this, contrary to explicit statements of the letters as to Paul's condition of mind and conscience, by modern interpreters of the Apostle's psychology. In reality the Lukan author has no more idea than Paul himself that the persecutor was harassed by doubts and scruples (see Acts 22:13; 23:1; 26:9). "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad," is not a proverb coined in the interest of prevention of cruelty to animals. It merely uses the figure of the headstrong ox who has met his master, and discovers it as he vainly lashes out against the sharp-pointed goad.

had manifested him glorified. All these data could have been inferred from the Epistles alone without Acts, and after all they furnish no more than the framework. The content and significance of the experience could be told, and are told, by none save Paul himself.

So far, then, as our subject involves some reference to recent studies of the authorship, date, sources, character and purpose of Acts, such as Harnack's two *Beiträge,* Norden's *Agnostos Theos,* Preuschen's *Commentary* and Torrey's *Composition and Date,* we may confine ourselves to the general caveat that Acts is not Paul, and if used at all in the attempt to interpret his religious experience it cannot safely be used for more than a record of the external phenomena as they would be subsequently related in common traditional report. Acts confirms certain inferences we might otherwise not feel it safe to make from the statements of Paul, and rounds out our knowledge of external conditions and circumstances. The letters must be the primary source, and the norm of authenticity.

## § 3. *The Externalities*

If the habitual method of treatment were here to be followed we should immediately address ourselves to the task of relating the circumstances of Paul's career up to the incident at Damascus as narrated in Acts, adduce a reference to his sickness, the " visions and revelations " and the " stake in the flesh " of II Cor. 12: 1–10, and proceed thereupon to draw psychological inferences. We might perhaps even deduce a " physiological psychology " of the phenomenon. From the point of view here taken, however, such a proceeding would be premature, even were the present writer qualified (as is not the case) to discuss problems of physiological psychology.

We must allow the psychologists their own judgment regarding the relative importance of the externalities referred

to, as compared with the more abiding results permanently registered in the convictions and character of the Apostle. But it must also be admitted that the general run of Lives of Paul and other apologetic literature show a correspondingly disproportionate interest in mere external circumstance. The story of Acts cannot, indeed, and should not, be neglected. It furnishes the objective data in concrete form, and it is not only interesting but important to observe how largely its story is borne out by the Epistles. This aspect of the matter, however, need detain us but briefly. Data already so many times threshed over are chiefly in need of winnowing. Of what sort, then, are these data? How stands the narrative of Acts when compared with the letters?

If the story of Paul's vision on the road to Damascus stood in Acts alone, without corroboration from Paul, it would probably have been treated by a considerable body of critics as largely legendary, perhaps as fundamentally a mere literary device. For in reality in similar literature, particularly in contemporary Jewish religious narrative, vision and the *bath qol* or " voice from heaven " is a stereotyped literary form, so completely a convention that when we read of Rabbi Eleazar or Rabbi Akiba, or whoever else, that he had a vision, or *bath qol,* saying so and so, every reader recognizes that this is a mere *modus loquendi.* The symbol of " vision," or angelic utterance, sets forth the real inner truth, as it were, from the divine side. It is not seriously intended to convey the idea that all the individuals of whom it is related were " psychics," and passed into a condition of ecstasy, or catalepsy, but only that their inner experiences may be thus symbolized or interpreted. The later Jewish narrative literature teems with examples. Angels, visions and voices from heaven are the regular stage properties of its drama, as indispensable as the *deus ex machina* to the dénouement of the classic tragedy. Our Book of Acts belongs to this same type of religious narrative.

In several cases it proves its use of the current *modus loquendi,* by relating visions contained within visions. Cornelius in Cæsarea not only has a vision coincidently with Peter's vision at Joppa; but in it the separate parties are introduced to one another. In Acts 9: 12 Ananias in Damascus has a vision in which he is told of Paul's experience, and not only so, but that even now Paul is having a second vision in which " he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him that he might receive his sight." One way to understand this intricate apparatus of visions and visions of visions is, of course, to suppose that everybody in those days was a " psychic," Galilean fishermen, Roman centurions, Jewish householders in Damascus, and all the rest. A little more familiarity with Jewish and Christian religious narrative from Tobit to the *Clementine Recognitions* and *El Zohar* leads to a much simpler solution. As we have just observed, vision in literature of this type is often little more than a conventional form, adapted to minds unaccustomed to philosophic abstractions, a means (so to speak) of taking the reader (or hearer) behind the scenes. It is the preacher's substitute for the philosopher's terminology of abstractions. To illustrate this mode of thought and expression we have the entire multitudinous class of compositions known as " apocalypses," or " revelations," which consist of nothing else save elaborations of this device. Now it is perfectly apparent in a large proportion of cases that the " vision " of the apocalyptist is as purely a literary fiction as John Bunyan's; since the compositions are often conspicuously the product of scissors and paste, ink-pots, manuscripts and midnight oil. Not only so, but we can even appreciate why this method of presenting the secrets of the invisible world had such authority and vogue. For in many cases the stories of vision are quite frankly built upon the ancient theory that gives the phenomenon its name of re-vela-tion, ἀποκάλυψις, or draw-

ing away of the veil. The idea is (and this is the generally accepted ancient theory of "vision") that the phenomena observed are real, though the normal man lacks faculty or capacity to perceive them. The seer only needs the opening of an inward or "spiritual" eye, whereupon he sees what is actually taking place in the realm of spirit though unperceived by ordinary mortals. Thus at Elisha's prayer his servants' "eyes are opened" to see the supernatural protection which really surrounds the prophet though unseen by fleshly eyes. Thus Balaam falls to the ground like Paul but has his (spiritual) eyes opened (Num. 24:4, 16). Thus Paul himself prays that his readers may have "the eyes of their heart enlightened" and mourns that the god of this world has "blinded the minds of the unbelieving." On this theory of vision of course it is perfectly simple for three men, or for the matter of that 500 men (I Cor. 15:6), to have simultaneously the same vision. It would be surprising if undergoing the same ecstatic experience at the same time the objects of their vision did not also coincide. It is also perfectly feasible on this conception of the matter for strangers to be introduced to one another in vision before they meet. I believe modern psychology no longer accepts the theory. How it proposes to deal with ancient vision narratives of simultaneous and interconnected visions which are built upon it I do not know.

It was worth while to dwell at some length upon the difference between the ancient and modern idea of "vision," if only for the sake of illustrating how needful it is before you introduce into court an ancient document as a deposition of hard and fast data, to take some account of its real meaning and *modus loquendi,* the language, the habits of expression, the order of ideas, through which it conveys its thought. However, my object in calling attention to the phenomena of that class of literature to which our book of Acts belongs, and to the change in meaning undergone

by the very word "vision" between ancient and modern times, was in this case to confirm and not to discredit the ordinary interpretation of the narrative. The type of literature represented, if not in Acts itself then certainly in its oral and written sources, is that narrative of religious edification which the Synagogue designates *midrash,* whose nearest modern analogue is pulpit anecdote. Unfortunately we have abundant reason from the known habits and methods of the teller of *midrash* to discount considerably from certain aspects of his story. From what has already been said it will be obvious that among these aspects must be such traits as appearances of angels, voices from heaven, visions, and other conventionalized methods of visualizing the abstract. The student of *midrash* will not derive from his reading of Acts the impression so liable to be made on the ordinary reader that pretty much every leading character in it was a "psychic." He may rather be disposed on similar ground to enter a serious caveat against the theory which is just now rejoicing in a very marked though perhaps undeserved popularity, that Jesus also was a "psychic" or "mystic." The so-called "Eschatological" school, who discover the primary key to his career and teaching in a temperament to which ecstasy and apocalyptic vision are the supreme guide and impulse, depict him as what Josephus or Celsus would have called a false prophet (γοητής) and the modern Syrian a *derwish.* They are satisfied with portraiture which like Munkacsy's, depicts him with "the face of a fanatic"; though Schweitzer, the leading exponent of the school, demurs, I believe, to terms which attribute a morbid or pathological character to the imputed paroxysms of his religious imagination. May it not be hoped that when the attempt is seriously made to treat of Jesus among the mystics some attention may be paid, in this case if not in Paul's, to the known characteristics of Jewish *midrash?* We have not, it is true, the products of Jesus' own pen to compare with the

pulpit anecdotes from which our evangelists have built the story of his career. But we do possess a fairly reliable compend of his precepts and parables; and these best authenticated utterances of Jesus contrast markedly in just this respect with the narrative source, that they subordinate the so-called "eschatological" to the "ethical" element. They furnish our justification for certain epithets which Professor Burkitt finds reprehensible in my book on Mark: "the sane and well-poised mind of the plain mechanic of Nazareth." [8]

Apropòs of this question of the interpretation of the literature of vision I remember as one of the wise remarks of a colleague [9] whose authority stands very high among its interpreters that it is one of the chief difficulties with this literature that one cannot tell to what extent its symbolism was meant to be taken literally, and to what extent it was conventional. I am quite sure he will agree with me in saying that those apocalyptists or vision-writers who make the loudest claims to supernatural sources of knowledge are as a rule far from showing the greatest real originality. The apocalyptic literature cannot compare in creative power with true prophecy. It borrows and reiterates both ideas and imagery. It is with this literature as with the mental process of mysticism in general. The more completely the powers of reasoning and discriminative judgment are suppressed, the more does the utterance tend to become imitative and stereotyped. Put the subconscious in control and the imitative instinct familiar to us in mass psychology will seize the reins; for the *sub*conscious is not really the *higher* realm of mind. Apocalyptic literature embodies some of the larger conceptions of Pan-Hellenistic civilization. These and the Persian angelology and demonology belonged to its environ-

[8] *Beginnings*, p. 108.

[9] Prof. F. C. Porter, author of *Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers*, New York, 1905, and of the article "Revelation of John" in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

ment. To this extent therefore it enlarges and universalizes; but its great ideas are adapted from prophecy.

If the psychological studies which have been devoted of late to the phenomena of "tongues" [10] in their modern manifestations can be trusted, these utterances of religious ecstasy are singularly illustrative of the imitative tendency of this mystical condition. Observers note frequently how a second ecstatic takes up the cry of the first and carries it on. The mere inarticulate sounds, or the disconnected ejaculations, of one will set the key and furnish the theme for another, till something intelligible is ultimately made out. The greater the numbers, and the higher the pitch of enthusiasm, the stronger of course will be the sympathetic or mass influence.

Paul is no exception to the rule that the mystical mind is not in itself creative. He is indeed himself original and creative in high degree. But Paul acted on the principle that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, and that their ecstatic utterances must be weighed and tested; and this not only by their own moral judgment, but by that of the brotherhood also. He maintained, indeed, that one should not quench the Spirit; but also that one must "prove all things" in the utterances of ecstasy, and that only that which was good must be held fast. He spoke with the mystic "tongues" more than all his converts at Corinth; but he was in favor of suppressing these manifestations of the Spirit if unamenable to "order"; and the first requisite for that "edification" which was to be the condition of admissibility was that some should be present to "interpret" the utterances in a rational and moral sense. The exception, then, is of the kind which shows the true meaning and application of the rule. Deductive logic is not the only "barren virgin." The ecstatic imagination itself may pour forth mere devastating floods.

[10] See e. g. the excursus on Glossolalia in Lake's *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul,* London, 1911, pp. 241–252 and authorities cited.

Pardon the digression, since it is not without bearing on the subject; but let me now return to the matter of the tradition as reported in Acts of Paul's mystical experience. For the reason that "psychic" experiences in Acts come so near in many cases to the mere conventional "vision" of Jewish *midrash,* we might well be inclined to discount its three narratives of Paul's conversion, which are not wholly reconcilable one with another. Fortunately so much is confirmed by Paul's own statements that there can be no doubt that the great Apostle was not only "psychic" but in the strictest medical sense even psychopathic. Unlike the author of Acts and the Synoptic writers Paul never mentions the subject of demon-possession or exorcism. Like the fourth evangelist he speaks only of a world-order, not of individual human beings, as under control of evil spirits. But in a much higher sense he did regard himself as a Spirit-controlled man. In fact he made this the supreme object and meaning of his religion. He unquestionably believed in spirits (δαίμονες) and probably could, if he chose, point to the record of more than one exorcism among his "signs of an apostle." But his belief in *the* Spirit so far transcended and eclipsed his inherent belief in "spirits," as to lift all his thought and expression to a higher plane.

It thus appears that while Paul's own nature was strongly affected by the scenes and atmosphere of religious enthusiasm in which he lived, and his language (as we shall presently see) is strongly colored by its imagery, phraseology, and mode of thought, nevertheless his attitude toward it is strongly critical. He holds its manifestations under rigid check, and brings them to the bar of an inexorable moral and religious judgment. In retrospect from this peak of decision his thought is seen to be truly creative, though its elements are drawn from his environment.

In Acts Paul's experience is one of a more or less stereotyped class. It is one of the visions and revelations of the

Lord which are a regularly assumed factor in that type of Christianized *midrash* on which the author of the narrative depends. For this reason it scarcely emerges from the crowd save as a signal instance of the Lord's deliverance of his people from the persecutor. In Paul's letters we also find reference to similar mystical experiences by others, that of Peter in particular marking the beginning of the series of manifestations which as a group was regarded as the promised Gift of the Spirit, and which in the form of "prophecy," or Christianized apocalypse, continued down to the close of the second century. In Paul's own case the initial "revelation" was followed by others in which he was in a more or less cataleptic physical condition, hearing unutterable things in ecstasy (whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell). He seemed to be caught away into Paradise; indeed he thinks it at least possible that his spirit (though not his "body") really was there. But as a sequel to the ecstasy there was given him a painful physical reaction "that he might not be exalted overmuch." He felt as if he had been pounded black and blue by "a messenger of Satan," and as if he had suffered impalement (*σκόλοψ τῇ σάρκι*). These factors of Paul's mystical experience might all be classified among the externalities. But the most vital factor of all came after. It consisted in the application of a calmly critical and constructive mind and an inexorably moral conscience to the suggestions of the kindled imagination. Paul's greatness lies in his sobriety.

As regards the initial experience the situation as described in Acts receives general confirmation from the Epistles. For it is clear from the references just quoted from II Cor. 12 that the "visions and revelations" belonged to his Christian experience only; they were "of the Lord," also that he had the optical impression, on at least the first occasion, of a glorified Being whom he knew to be the same "Jesus" to whom the victims of his persecution looked as their "Lord."

("Am *I* not an apostle; have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" I Cor. 9: 1. The use of the personal name "Jesus" is highly significant). Paul's certainty that Jesus is "at the right hand of God" where he "maketh intercession for us," without which "raising for our justification" we should be "yet in our sins" (Rom. 4: 25; I Cor 15: 12–17) is manifestly based upon this mystical experience. But equally so his resurrection doctrine, his argument for the metamorphosis of the "body of our humiliation" into a "body of glory" derived from heaven as a permanent habitation of the soul. The evidence of his own eyes (inwardly "enlightened," Eph. 1: 18) convinced him that the risen Christ had such a "glorious body." Nor did this experience stand alone. In Gal. 2: 7, 8 Paul explicitly sets the experience by which God "energized in" him for an apostleship to the Gentiles in parallelism and comparison with the corresponding experience of Peter, which in I Cor. 15: 5 opens the series of resurrection appearances. Equally significant is the fact that the line between this series, and subsequent visions and revelations not entitled to the same authoritative and apostolic character, is drawn not between this series and his own experiences, but *after himself*. His experience stands on a par with that of Peter, the twelve, the 500, James, and "all the Apostles" and is undivided from the rest. But it was "last of all."

These facts and statements of Paul corroborate the story of Acts as to the great occurrence on the road to Damascus. They do more. They furnish the key to the mystical experience of all who shared with Paul the apostleship whose indispensable condition was ability to bear first-hand witness to the resurrection of "Jesus our Lord."

As already noted,[11] the inference sometimes drawn from the proverb quoted in Acts 26: 14 that Paul had misgivings as to the rightness of his persecuting career is a misinterpre-

[11] Above, p. 91, note 7.

tation of the meaning of the narrative as well as an injustice to Paul. The tradition itself has no idea of suggesting the occurrence of scruples to his mind. Paul himself is even more emphatic on this point. The arrest of his persecuting career came to him as a complete surprise. It was not man's work, but God's. Acquaintance he must have had with the beliefs of his victims, with their ritual of baptism and of the supper which betokened forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. These practices and beliefs of his victims he must have been familiar with, if only to testify against them and cause them to blaspheme. Indelible upon his mental retina must have been the vision caught from martyrs such as Stephen of their glorified Lord, standing to plead for them [12] at the right hand of God. But Paul was not conscious of misgivings on *this* score even when he persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and made havoc of it. His mind was indeed ill at ease. The testimony of that despairing cry in his outline of experience of the convert from legalism: "O wretched man, who shall deliver me from this dead body of sinful flesh," is of itself enough to show that beneath the surface of fanatic zeal for the religion of Pharisaism great deeps were being broken up. But Paul's testimony is explicit, emphatic, undeniable, that he was utterly unconscious

[12] The primary conception of the function of the risen and exalted Christ was certainly that of the advocate or intercessor with God, who "stands" to plead the cause of his client. This was the promise of Jesus at the first prediction of his martyr-fate (Mt. 10:32–33; Lk. 12:8–9; *cf.* the "faithful saying," II Tim. 2:11–13). According to the current doctrine of Jewish martyrology (IV. Macc. 18:7), those who had voluntarily dedicated their lives for the Kingdom had opportunity in an immediate resurrection ("even now before the throne of God") to plead the offering of their blood as a "propitiation" for the sin of Israel. With this promise of Jesus to act as heavenly Intercessor for his disciples, especially such as should be called to "suffer with him," is also coupled the promise to "sit with him" at his royal banquet table. The attitude of "standing" is the natural one for the Intercessor, that of "sitting at the right hand of God" of the victorious Leader.

that the message of the cross and resurrection was to prove the way out. If the inevitable trend of his hopeless quest for "a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law" was toward a gospel of the grace of God in Christ, it was subconscious reasoning on Paul's part. The solution came as unexpectedly as when the tides of the sea sweep away in one sudden, overwhelming rush the futile dikes long silently and unknowingly undermined. It came like the lightning stroke, or better, to use his own sublime figure of the new creation, it was as though He who commanded the light to shine out of the primeval darkness had shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of the forgiving God, "in the face of Jesus Christ."

Even on the score of externalities we can learn but little more from the story of Acts concerning Paul's mystical experience. Let the romancers make what they will of the author's reference to the "noonday" whose brightness was exceeded by the glory seen by the inward eye. The pathology of sunstroke seems to me as much beside the mark as diagnoses based on the figure of speech Acts 9: 18 (drawn from Tobit 11: 12), "the scales fell from his eyes." Paul undoubtedly came "out of darkness into marvellous light"; but whether in addition to the symptoms already described he also experienced a temporary blindness I should think it as difficult to establish on critical grounds, as it surely is indifferent on religious and (I imagine) on psychological grounds as well. Temporary blindness, I presume, is nothing unusual after similar experiences of religious ecstasy. On the other hand this feature of the story could also easily take its origin in the almost stereotyped metaphor of Eph. 1: 18. Acts 13: 11 describes the temporary blindness inflicted on Elymas the sorcerer in almost identical terms.

Nor can we lay much weight upon the descriptions in Acts of Paul's subsequent "visions and revelations of the Lord." The fact is attested in II Cor. 12: 1–4; the particular narra-

tives are not to be trusted in detail. Thus Acts 22: 17–21 relates a vision of Paul in the temple, by which he is directed to leave the work he had begun among the Greek-speaking Jews of Jerusalem. But this is quite irreconcilable, not only with the explicit and emphatic statements of Gal. 1: 17–24, but even with Acts 9: 26–30. Take even the parlous step of rejecting Paul's own emphatic testimony to his avoidance during this period of all work among Jews and especially among those of Jerusalem, keeping apart from the mother community, and still you cannot reconcile Acts with itself. Acts 9: 26–30 relates that he joined the company of the apostolic brotherhood in Jerusalem as the first step after his conversion, Barnabas acting as his sponsor, and that "he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem," making it his special work to evangelize "the Hellenistic Jews" of the city. The same narrative relates further that the Jews of Jerusalem "went about to kill him," so that his escape had to be effected by the brethren, who "brought him down to Cæsarea" and so ultimately "sent him to Tarsus," whence Barnabas later brought him to Antioch in time for the First Missionary Journey. If we hold to this account of the violent breaking off of a promising work among the Hellenists of Jerusalem, then what becomes of the story of Acts 22: 17–21 of the vision in the temple commanding Paul to "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles?" Was Paul this time disobedient unto the heavenly vision" until he learned wisdom from the mob? Did he take up his work among the Hellenistic Jews of Jerusalem in spite of the divine mandate? Or have we here one of those literary "visions" which have only the function of the chorus in Greek tragedy, to acquaint the reader with the inner significance of the drama?

The case stands somewhat better with Acts 27: 23–26, which, even if it be one of the "literary" type of visions,

has a certain element of historical value. For we can authenticate the ideas expressed in this vision in the night of shipwreck from the Epistles, even though no epistle belongs exactly to this date or mentions the part here played by Paul. The diary of Paul's companion which in expanded form constitutes the basis of these chapters of Acts, tells how the whole ship's company of 276 persons, including not only the pilot-captain, but the officer in charge of the prisoners, of whom Paul was one, put themselves under his direction. So extraordinary was the impression made by his serene courage that one and all owed their escape to him, and practically acknowledged the fact by submitting to his temporary control. Whatever allowance we may be disposed to make for the enthusiasm of Paul's admirer, the story stands too near the fact, is too well substantiated in its main data, to permit any doubt on the commanding influence exerted by Paul's extraordinary personality. There is mutual corroboration between Epistles and narrative in this. But we may go a little further still. According to Acts 27: 23–26 Paul took this command of the ship's company in the name of a vision granted to him in the very night of their utter despair. The narrator is not concerned to tell us how Paul's mind could under these circumstances be turned in upon itself; whether he suddenly lapsed into oblivion of the roaring tempest, the crash of the rigging and the cries of the frightened, half-mutinous crew, or perhaps slept after tumult had given place to lethargy. "This night," said Paul to the company, "there stood by me an angel of the God whose I am, saying Fear not, Paul, thou must stand before Cæsar: and lo, God hath granted thee all that sail with thee." Whether we regard the vision as real or "literary," let us at least take home its sense and meaning. Paul's confidence is based on a conviction that he is an ambassador for God, and that as such he is guaranteed safe-conduct. Not only so, but in answer

to his intercession this safe-conduct has been extended to cover "all that sail with him." Now there is no reference to the incidents of this voyage in any of the later letters of Paul. But there are two things which recall the tone and conception of this "vision" in the earlier letters which immediately precede the journey and in which he speaks of Rome as the long-desired goal of his missionary ambition. These two are worth noting for their bearing on the character and personality of Paul, as well as on the reliability of Acts. One is the tone of sublime confidence and mastery of circumstance, the tone of a man convinced that the very life that he lives is not his, but God through Christ working in him. To this kind of man gravitates the mastery and leadership in times of crisis, almost in spite of himself. The other point of coincidence is the declaration of Paul in II Cor. 5:20–6:10, uttered in behalf of himself and his fellow "ministers of God," that in all their afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, . . . dying, yet behold we live, nevertheless "we are ambassadors on behalf of God." In a later epistle (Philemon 9) the figure recurs. Paul is now an "ambassador in a chain." What we may probably regard as the very latest authentic fragment from his pen (II Tim. 4:17) reflects the same tone, and in part the same language, as the story of Acts, with its unterrified, masterful personality. It describes how the ambassador delivered his message before the unrighteous imperial judge in words that recall those of Acts: "The Lord *stood by me* and gave me power and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth." Fact, or figure of speech, the scene of Paul's rallying the courage of that shipwrecked crew with the declaration of his vision depicts his true personality. He faced the rage of elements, of beasts, of men, thrones of princes, or of demonic powers, as a conscious "ambassador for God."

## § 4. *The Inward Experience*

From the secondary source in the Book of Acts, serviceable when controlled by the primary of Paul's own words, and with due regard to the true nature of the book and the purpose, point of view and degree of reliability of its sources, let us turn next to the great Epistles, which have come through the fire of criticism [13] not only unscathed but vindicated, as I believe no other writings ever have been, in their henceforth established authenticity.

Psychological criticism may utilize at least the great Epistles to the Galatians, the Romans and the Corinthians with perfect confidence that they reflect the real Paul, and in an intimate self-portraiture. Whatever other epistles are added is hardly a matter of serious concern to such an enquiry as ours, because the student of religious mysticism is interested in the defense of Paul's apostleship by depiction of his religious experiences, and with this the four major Epistles are largely concerned.

As we have seen, this defense was made against those who opposed Paul's authority in Galatia, mainly by a retrospect over his conversion, calling, and early ministry in Gal. 1:11–2:21. We have as the finale to this defense a summing up of his own case and that of his fellow "ministers of God" against a similar onslaught at Corinth in II Cor. 3:1–4:10, a more instrospective interpretation of the same vocational experience. Besides this direct defense of the Apostle's call from God there are very important side-lights upon it in First Corinthians, such as the comparison of his own unproclaimed mystical insight, or *gnosis,* with the "wisdom" so highly rated at Corinth apparently by the followers of Apollos. This defense of Paul's *gnosis,* or mystical insight covers I Cor. 1:18–3:9, and there are further references to the attacks upon his apostleship in 9:1,

[13] Gloël, *Die Paulinischen Briefe im Feuer der Kritik,* 1890.

which furnish the indispensable historical occasion and perspective. This Corinthian correspondence furnishes also most serviceable practical illustrations of Paul's sense of superhuman authority in the directions laid down for church discipline in 4: 18–5: 5 and elsewhere. We have already availed ourselves of the references to his endowment with "tongues" and other "spiritual gifts" in I Cor. 12–14 and of the section in II Cor. 12: 1–9 concerning his "visions and revelations of the Lord" and his "stake (σκόλοψ) in the flesh," and have noted the bearing of I Cor. 15: 1–11 (where Paul links on his own experience to that of those who were Apostles before him) on the psychology of the resurrection appearances in general.

Romans also has its contribution to this spiritual autobiography. Thus Rom. 7: 7–8: 11 describes the deliverance of the slave of sin, who finds the law only the strength of sin, an ally to his enemy rather than to himself, because of the inherent propensities of sinful flesh; but is raised to a new, triumphant and eternally expansive life by the infusion of the Spirit of Adoption. This description is of course intended to be typical; but we should not have the personal "I" and "me" were it not also a true reflection of Paul's own religious experiences. With this might be connected Phil. 3: 4–14, both testimonies of great value were it our intention to extend our survey over Paul's entire religious experience.

But it is needful to fix reasonable limits, and the study of Paul's mystical experience will be best subserved if we here confine ourselves to its one supreme example, the occasion to which he is obliged by the opposition of his detractors to revert again and again, the vision of the risen Christ at his conversion; for this experience furnished the ground and warrant of his apostleship, and was the source of his gospel as well.

The comparison already made between the current report of Acts and the implications of the Epistles will in the main

suffice as a survey of the preceding course of events both outward and inward. The statement of Gal. 1:21–22 that when Paul "came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" after his stay in Arabia and his first visit to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion, he "was still unknown by face unto the churches in Judæa" is manifestly irreconcilable with Acts 9:26–30; but it will hardly bear the strain which W. Heitmüller puts upon it in maintaining that Paul's entire career up to this point had been confined to regions outside of Palestine.[14] It is true that no great weight can be attached to the connection so easy to make between Paul's name and that of the eminent Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder, which appears in Acts 22:3. It is also true that there is a mental gap in the statement of Gal. 1:17 "I *returned* to Damascus," which it would be simplest to fill out as Heitmüller demands by the words "where, as you know, I was resident," or something to that effect. But in view of the explicit reference in Gal. 1:13 to the familiarity of the readers with the story of Paul's persecutions it is certainly also possible to supply the lack by words such as these: "whither, as you know, I was bent in my career of persecution." To set aside as unhistorical the entire tradition of Paul's rabbinic training in Jerusalem on no better grounds than these is hardly warranted. The difficulty we have in explaining his lack of earlier contact with the movement of John the Baptist and of Jesus is more serious, but a temporary absence from Jerusalem might account for it.

On the other hand the absence of any reference, direct or indirect, in any of the Epistles to Stephen, the lack of any trace of the story of the early Hellenistic propaganda in Jerusalem and southward to Philistia and Egypt, as well as of anything attributed to its influence, has a certain significance. It tends to corroborate the general verdict of the critics of Acts 6–8 that the figure of Saul of Tarsus in

[14] *ZNW.* XIII. 4, 1912, *s. v.* Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus.

7:58; 8:1 and 3 is brought in too late, too haltingly, and with too great disruption of the context to be original.[15] At all events nothing in the Pauline Epistles suggests the slightest influence from this quarter. If Paul heard such utterances as the preaching and defense of Stephen in Acts 7 they must have been simply typical of many. Yet even this implies much. It implies at least familiarity with the two central observances of "the faith" of which the persecutor "made havock" (Gal. 1:23), and the religious value attached to them. Especially is it certain that Paul would not have persecuted this "Way" unto the death had not the doctrine so clearly declared in I Cor. 15:3 to have been traditionally "received" by him (*παρέλαβον*), and in I Cor. 11:23–25 even as "received (*παρέλαβον*) from (*ἀπό*) the the Lord," been clearly present to his mind as "a Way of justification"[16] incompatible with "that which is of the law." The mutual exclusiveness of the two Ways of justification is merely reiterated from the opposite standpoint in dispute with Peter, Gal. 2:15–21. On the fundamental point of his "gospel of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18, 19), therefore, it was not instruction as to the contents and meaning of the Christian "Way" that was required by the persecutor. Indeed he would seem to have had much clearer insight than the very chief Apostle into the full sweep of its implications. What was required to transform the enemy of the faith into its most ardent and effective missionary was merely the reversal of his point of view. He now saw it as a "way of life."

The very form of Paul's vision is as certainly part of the

[15] With these references must of course be classed that in 22:20. On the episode of Stephen and the Seven and its relation to the other sources of Acts, see Bacon *s. v.* "Stephen's Speech" in *Yale Bicentennial Contributions to Semitic and Biblical Studies*, N. Y., 1901.

[16] On the significance of the phrase in Mt. 21:32, see Bacon in *Expositor*, VIII, 93 (Sept., 1918), *s. v.* "John the Baptist as Preacher of Justification by Faith."

real (though violently rejected) furniture of his mind, as the implied substance of his gospel. Were we to take as authentic fact the participation of Paul in the trial scene of Stephen he must have been eye and ear witness of that apostrophe of the martyr to his heavenly Advocate: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." We need not take this participation as literal fact, any more than we take the transfigured face of the martyr "as it were the face of an angel," or the statement that he "saw the glory of God," as literal fact, but we cannot help taking this as a typical description, and a correct and characteristic one, of scenes which the persecutor Saul actually did witness. Doubtless when he went up to Jerusalem "to hear the story of Peter" (ἱστορῆσαι Πέτρον, Gal. 1:18) his first enquiry was as to that epoch-making first appearance of this risen Lord. But the general nature of the reply, and the outline features of the vision of the Lord "glorified" "at the right hand of God" cannot possibly have been unknown to Paul from long before his conversion. He knew them from his victims. Moreover, as we have seen, it belongs to the very theory of vision, as then understood, that the manifestations should have the same general appearance. Even apart from the inherent tendency of ecstatic vision to repeat the known experience of others, the testimony would have been viewed with suspicion had it not described "the same Lord" in substantially the same conditions of "glory." It is the very object of the vision" (ὅραμα) of the Transfiguration to convey some idea of this condition of the "glorified," and for this reason it is continually so employed, as in II Peter 1:16–18, the *Apoc. Petri* (beginning), and "the Elders" in Irenaeus, *Haer. V.* v. 1.

All this belongs among the things of which we should need only to be reminded. The data of Paul's mystical experience were all present to his consciousness, however unwelcome, just as the cold elements of an amalgam may lie to-

gether side by side within the crucible, and give no sign of what is to be, until the sudden lightning-flame of the voltaic arc fuses them into a new creation. What we need most to know is the source and nature of this lightning-flame, so far as it is given to human eye to look upon it unblinded. And of this too the Apostle does not leave us wholly in ignorance.

Paul was indeed without conscious misgivings as to his persecuting course. Whatever it must have cost that nature of marvellous tenderness to dip his hands day after day in the blood of men like Stephen, he verily thought he did God service,[17] and in that conviction he steeled himself to the hideous task. But while his unconsciousness of preparation is so complete that he cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that the overturn was not his doing but the utterly unforeseeable act of God (Gal. 1:15), he also lays before us without reserve the evidence that his mind was continually advancing toward a condition of unstable equilibrium from which the overturn would be as inevitable as return would be unthinkable. He was seeking "a justification of mine own, even that which is of the law."

How long would the crisis be postponed? No answer to this question can be so eloquent as the Pauline letters themselves. The overturn would be inevitable from the moment the struggling soul became inwardly conscious that the demand of "the law" had passed the limit set by the inherited "weakness" of human flesh. And were we to choose a moment when this impasse would be reached in Paul's case, what other could be compared with that when he approached Damascus, where the bloody work of persecution was to begin afresh.

[17] The expression is from the speech in Acts 26:9; but it is confirmed by a deutero-Pauline hand in I Tim. 1:13, and (more reliably) by the absence from the authentic letters of any trace of self-condemnation for more than unintended wrong on this score.

It lies outside our purpose to consider the references in II Cor. 11:23–33 to Paul's experiences as a missionary during the unrecorded decade of his work "in Syria and Cilicia," and even to take extensive note of the ecstatic experiences described in II Cor 12:1–4, which from its date ("fourteen years ago") must have fallen within this period. Next to his initial experience it must have been Paul's greatest, else he would not go so far back to recall it. Needless to point out that if such experiences could be used as proofs of superhuman direction and authority, occasions of "glorying," they must surely have been sought with utmost desire, and with the application of such approved methods as fasting, vigil and prayer. In Paul's own case we can well believe that another "revelation of the Lord," and in a more favoring attitude, would be ardently desired by the Apostle to the Gentiles, especially amid the perils and difficulties which are described in the preceding paragraph (11:24–33) as surrounding his early course. If Paul prayed for the experience, and was in measure heard (though he says nothing in this case of an envisagement of the Lord, but only of having been "caught up into the *third* heaven," the abode of angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect), the boon was not without painful physical reactions. The trance, during which he seemed to be "out of the body," was followed by a "weakness" interpreted by the Apostle as an angel of Satan sent to beat him with his fists "lest I should be exalted overmuch." Against this "stake in the flesh" he also thrice besought the Lord (i. e., the glorified Jesus), but with no more than the answer (an audition?) "My favor sufficeth thee; for the power (δύναμις) that comes from me is made perfect in weakness."

It is probable from Paul's use of the plural ("I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord," ver. 1; "by reason of the greatness of the revelations," ver. 7.) that other experiences of trance and ecstasy followed at intervals, though

perhaps in a diminishing scale. But we are more concerned with that of which these were mere echoes and after-glows. It is time that we turned to a reëxamination of the letters in the hope that we may recognize reflections of this first great mystical experience. We shall also bear in mind, however, that the letters themselves, as well as Acts, require interpretation by methods of historical and literary criticism; since even Paul himself, to make plain to his readers the true bearing and significance of his "mystery," must needs employ the modes of thought and modes of expression current in his religious environment and theirs.

### § 5. *The Subject's own Interpretation.*

It may seem strange if I maintain that of all fields of New Testament study it is this most ancient and hackneyed ground of Pauline phraseology and mode of thought that has been made most fruitful to the historical exegete by the course of modern discovery. Leave superlatives aside. There can at least be no question of the immense importance of the history and literature of contemporary Hellenistic religions, the religions of personal redemption called "mysteries" from their dealing in and claim to be based upon mystical revelations, the τελεταί (as they are also called) of Isis, Serapis, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysus, Asklepios and the rest. The propaganda of these Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity[18] was sweeping over the Graeco-Roman world in Paul's time, and coloring both its religious phraseology and modes of thought. Reitzenstein, Dieterich, Hepding, Cumont, Rohde, Anrich, and in English Frazer and Kennedy, have poured a flood of light upon the language and conceptions of the Pauline Epistles from the literature and

[18] Such is the title of a recent voluminous compend of the material by Legge.

monuments of this comparatively obscure and popular type of religious life, and make it impossible any longer to view the mysticism of Paul in the light of a generation ago.

But rather than go back to these too little known authorities let me refer to a very recent and admirable summary in the chapter headed " Faith and Mystical Union " in Dr. W. Morgan's *Religion and Theology of Paul* (1917). I must indeed demur at the outset to one of Dr. Morgan's declarations which seems likely to produce a false impression, if indeed it does not wholly overstate the case. It is his statement (p. 123) that the mystical strain in the religion of Paul " formed no part of his Jewish heritage." True the statement is doubly qualified. Dr. Morgan first limits his definition of Pauline mysticism to " the idea of a divine indwelling, or of a relation of God that transcends all personal relations," so that Paul's conception might be said to differ so widely from the Old Testament idea of the Spirit-filled prophet, or other agent of Jehovah, as to be "altogether foreign to it." In the second place he recognizes that " in the later Jewish writings, when, as in Philo, there has been influence from the side of Oriental religion," we do find true mysticism. But this hardly disposes of the case. For, to begin with, Paul is himself as truly a Hellenistic Jew as Philo, and quite as much exposed at Tarsus, one of the earliest seats of the Mithraic mysteries, and a stronghold of Platonized Stoicism, as Philo at Alexandria, to " influence from the side of Oriental religion." Moreover Paul is just as fully persuaded as " Jewish Apocalyptic " (to which Dr. Morgan declares mysticism to be no less " foreign " than to the Old Testament) that religious knowledge directly and supernaturally conveyed from God (gnosis) is the prerogative of Israel. The Jew rests upon *torah* (revelation) ; he glories in (knowing) God and (having) the knowledge of His will, possessing in the Torah the standard of knowledge

(τὴν μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως) and of the truth (Rom. 2: 17–20). Paul's feeling likewise, with regard to his "knowledge of all mysteries" is the precise analogue of that of the apocalyptic writers, who hold that they alone are mystically empowered to solve the riddles of man's duty and destiny in the mysterious universe in which he finds himself. In this age "prophecy" is understood as an "unveiling" (ἀποκάλυψις, revelatio) of the invisible world. It is the typical endowment of the gift of prophecy, to which Paul certainly laid claim, to "know all mysteries and all knowledge." (I Cor. 13: 2; Eph. 1: 8–9; 3: 3–6). This "anointing" gives the "Son" who is known of God, the key to all knowledge, and a superiority to all teachers (I Jn. 2: 27); for to him are known the real nature, wishes and purpose of the Creator, while Gentile philosophy toils in vain over the problem. Hence the apocalyptic writers never tire of insisting that these things are matters of revelation (μυστήρια) and as such only to be "spiritually" known. They are secrets "hid from the foundation of the world," not merely from men but from angels, attainable only by the men to whom the Creator talked as he talked with Moses "face to face"; men who, like Enoch, Elias and (according to contemporary tradition) Moses, were "taken up" into His presence, or, like Esdras, after ascetic preparation were supernaturally inspired to "renew" the Torah.

Israel's claim, accordingly, to be the chosen instrument of divine revelation to the world is exactly expressed by the title "mystagogue" (μυσταγῶγος). It is this gnosis to which he was elected by the Lord of heaven and earth that both proves him the chosen "son" and commissions him with his missionary task. The world groping in darkness after God waits for the people elected to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and Jewish "Wisdom" gives devout thanks to the Creator of all that it was His inscrutable decree (εὐδοκία) to hide these things from the wise and deep-think-

ing, and to "reveal" them to "babes."[19] For it is not originally a Christian, but a pre-Christian conception of Jewish lyric Wisdom, a conception that is reflected both in thought and language in Paul's defense of his gnosis in I Cor. 1:8–3:9, that no man can "know the Father" save the chosen Son (Israel), and that humble proselyte to whomsoever the Son (as mystagogue) willeth to reveal Him.[20]

As we see, Paul's sympathies are entirely on the Jewish side in this conflict between the claims of Gentile philosophy and Jewish revelation. For the conflict is at its acme in the apocalyptic literature of Paul's period, though its roots go back at least to the Deuteronomic writer who declares to Israel in Moses' name as regards the Torah:

> This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the Gentiles which shall hear all these ordinances and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people; for what great nation hath a god so nigh unto them as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him.

Paul not only endorses this claim of Mosaic gnosis, but expresses himself in the very language of contemporary Jewish Apocalypse. Take for example the boast of Moses in the contemporary or slightly earlier *Assumptio Mosis* 1:12–14, concerning the hidden mystery of the purpose of the Creator. For in Gen. 1:26–30 this purpose is declared to be the cosmic lordship of man, but the current Jewish interpretation (*Ap. Bar.* xiv 18; II Esdr. vi. 55, etc.) represents it as the universal lordship of the seed of Abraham, whom God made "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13).

[19] A characteristic term in Hellenistic religion for the neophyte; *cf.* I Cor. 3:1.

[20] On the true meaning of this characteristic Jewish Wisdom hymn placed in the mouth of Jesus in Mt. 11:25–30; Lk. 10:21–22, see Bacon, *Harv. Theol. Rev.* IX (Oct., 1916), *s. v.* "The Son as Organ of Revelation," with authorities cited.

God hath created the world (says Moses in the apocalypse) on behalf of His people. But He was not pleased to make known this purpose from the foundation of the world, in order that the Gentiles might thereby be convicted, yea, to their own humiliation might (by their vain and contradictory speculations) convict one another. Accordingly He designed and devised me (Moses) and prepared me before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator of His covenant.

Not only is this purpose of the Creator a mystery hid since the foundation of the world from all save the people of the revelation. It is a secret even from the angels, who vainly seek to peer into these things. The (demonic) "rulers of this world" prove their ignorance by their death-dealing hostility to "the Lord of glory" (I Cor. 2:6–9). Their confusion and ruin will come when the groaning creation is delivered from their evil sway, and committed to its rightful heirs in the "manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19–21). Paul is not less convinced of the hiding of this mystery from the angels than is the apocalyptic writer of the *Secrets of Enoch* (xxiv. 3; xl. 3, etc.), who repeatedly vaunts the knowledge of this favorite agent of cosmological revelation as exceeding that of the angels, and depicts Enoch's interview with the Creator in person as beginning with the assurance:

Enoch, the things which thou seest at rest and in motion were created by me. I will tell thee now, even from the first, what things I created from the non-existent, and what visible things from the invisible. Not even to my angels have I told my secrets, nor have I informed them of their origin, nor have they understood my infinite creation which I tell thee of to-day.

It may not be correct to speak of this Jewish doctrine of the hidden "mystery" of God conveyed through revelation, and only to be "spiritually" known, as "mysticism"; and it would be manifestly improper, as we ourselves have been at pains to show, to treat these alleged "visions" of the apocalyptic writers as actual ecstasy. The vision form,

in the Enoch apocalypses at least, is purely conventional. Still, when we find the Apostle Paul adopting an obviously analogous standpoint, contrasting in I Cor. 1:18–2:16 the spiritual wisdom and knowledge of God's purpose in the creation which is his through possession of the Spirit of Christ,[21] with the foolishness of the wisdom of the world and the ignorance of even the angelic powers, we must at all events either subtract this element from the content of his mystical experience, or else demur to Dr. Morgan's statement that mysticism of the Pauline type is "foreign to Jewish Apocalyptic."

In distinction from the Alexandrian Apollos, Paul had reserved his gnosis from the Corinthians in favor of a simpler gospel. But he certainly claimed the full endowment of the Christian mystagogue. In I Cor. 2:6–16 he sets forth a gnosis concerning the things unrevealed to outward eye or ear pertaining to the purpose of God in preparing the creation as a "free gift" to those who love Him; a gnosis only to be had by revelation of the Spirit, and which belongs to those who "have the mind of Christ." For it is conveyed in the same way that "the spirit of a man teaches him" the purpose with which he frames his human constructions. Repeatedly in later epistles (Col. 1:9; 2:3; Eph. 1:9–10; 3:3–5) he appeals to his endowment with that "spiritual gift" of "prophecy" whose ideal was to sound "all mysteries and all gnosis."

But it is also unquestionably true that Paul interprets this Jewish doctrine of revelation from the standpoint of his

[21] According to Pauline Christology it was the divine decree (εὐδόκησεν) that the whole completeness (πλήρωμα) of the "powers" should take up their permanent abode (κατοικῆσαι) in Jesus (Col. 1:19). It could thus be said of the Christ who was glorified in and by His Spirit that he was "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, in whom and through whom all things were created" (Col. 1:15–17; I Cor. 8:6). For in the Wisdom literature, which Paul freely employs, the Spirit is God's agent in creation.

own and his readers' environment, and that when he places his own revelation "through the Spirit" of the mystery "which God foreordained before the world unto our glory" in detailed comparison with that of Moses, making of it a vision of God productive of immortality by conformation to the divine "image" exhibited in the glorified Christ, he is interpreting both the Mosaic vision of God on Sinai (Ex. 33:12–34:35), and his own mystical experience in terms of mystery religion. It is time then that we heard from Dr. Morgan as to the influence of these upon Paul's language and mode of thought.

Time and again (says Dr. Morgan) we have had occasion to refer to Hellenistic religion as affecting at vital points the structure of the Apostle's thought. To this source we have traced the dualism he establishes between the flesh and the Spirit, his conception of Christ as Kyrios and as the Logos, and his concentration of the significance of Christ's historical life in the two cardinal events of the death and the resurrection. And in succeeding chapters, when we come to speak of his doctrine of regeneration, of pneumatic gifts, and of the sacraments, it will be necessary to recur to it.

Dr. Morgan proceeds in fact at this point to describe the essential features of "Hellenistic religion" with its protean drama of the dying and resurrected Redeemer-god (Attis, Adonis, Serapis, Mithras, Dionysus, or however named), and its boon to the worshipper of a blessed immortality beyond the grave, attained by mystical assimilation to and participation in the life of the glorified divinity. The contribution of the East to the new religious era was "a type of religion individualistic, otherworldly, orgiastic, dualistic, ascetic, redemptive, mystical." That of the West was a Platonized Stoicism "as represented by Posidonius and Cornutus," a religious philosophy, or gnosis, of which the classical example is the Alexandrine Jew Philo. "To the same stream belong the Hermetic writings, the many Gnostic sects and the Neo-Platonic philosophy."

We are more particularly concerned, however, with the actual language and symbolism of the cults; for the devout expression of the *mystae,* who describe the inner experience by which they are "in a sense born again" (*quodam modo renatos*) and "placed in the course of a new life in salvation," bring us into living contact with contemporary religious mysticism in mode of thought and phraseology as well.

The initiation of Lucius into the mysteries of Isis as related by Apuleius [22] is a comparatively well known instance from classical literature. It is solemnized as the symbol of a voluntary death (*ad instar voluntariae mortis*). Lucius is forbidden to disclose the precise nature of his experiences, but gives a symbolical description.

> I penetrated the boundaries of death; I trod the threshold of Proserpine, and after being borne through all the elements I returned to earth; at midnight I beheld the sun radiating white light; I came into the presence of the gods below and the gods above, and did them reverence close at hand.

Lucius not only participated in the death and resurrection of the god through the symbolism of his initiation and his own mystical experience, but is greeted by the worshippers as now of one substance with the divine being. Arrayed in the robe of Olympus, a flaming torch in his hand, a crown of spotless palm upon his head, he is "set up like the image of a god," and in this guise receives from them religious homage. It is no longer he that lives, but the divinity whose glory he has seen in dazzling light that now lives in him.

Archaeological discovery adds its confirmation to the testimony of classical literature regarding the goal and method of Hellenistic religion. Thus the Papyrus Mimaut describes the experience of the neophyte in the mysteries of Asklepios in the thanksgiving:

[22] *Metamorphosis,* XI.

"We rejoice that while we are still in our bodies thou didst make us divine by the vision of thyself."

The so-called Mithras Liturgy gives expression to the same fundamental conception of a mystical dying and rising again, the neophyte entering into the life of the divinity through ecstatic contemplation, or beatific vision.

Gaze upon the god (so he is instructed), and greet him thus. Hail, Lord (κύριε), ruler of the waters, . . . potentate of the spirit, born again I depart life (πάλιν γενόμενος ἀπογίγνομαι), being the while exalted; and having been exalted I die; born of the birth which is the parent of life, dissolved in death I go the way as thou hast appointed it for a law, and didst create the (initiatory) sacrament.

We are not, of course, to see any direct literary relation between this language of Hellenistic mystery religions and Paul's exclamation to Roman Christians in whose evangelization he had borne no part:

Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through (διά) the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection.

The coincidence of language and ideas between the New Testament doctrine of new birth by water and the Spirit and that of the mystic who is instructed to "gaze upon" the divinity of the mystery cult, saluting him as "Lord of the water and the spirit," entreating that in his (symbolical) departure from life he may be "born again" of the birth which is the parent of life, is not a coincidence of

[23] Quoted by E. F. Scott in *American Journal of Theology* for July, 1916, from Reitzenstein, *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien-Religionen,* Leipzig and Berlin, 1910.

literary dependence on one side or the other, but a reflection in both of religious ideas and phraseology which in the period of Paul were disseminated throughout the Empire.

Let us not delay with Mithraic (?) conceptions and phraseology, which in these regions can be carried back to the time of Paul only when, like the phrase "born again to eternity" (*renatus in aeternum*), they express ideas common to all the mystery cults. We must hasten to our more immediate goal, the interpretation of Paul's fullest exposition of his fundamental mystical experience, as it appears in his comparison of the vocation of the Christian Apostle with the revelation to Moses. We must read again the defense of the Ministry of the New Covenant in II Cor. 3: 1–6: 10 in the light of contemporary conceptions of mystical participation in the immortal life of the divinity, "transfiguration" (μεταμόρφωσις) and "glorification" through ecstatic vision and "illumination" (φωτισμός), "apotheosis" by reflection on the human retina of the image (εἴκων) of the god (θεότης διὰ θέας).

For this purpose we may venture to transcribe a single paragraph from Dr. Morgan's summary of recent discovery as to the meaning in Paul's time of religious gnosis.

> The supreme importance thus attached to gnosis is one of the most outstanding features of Hellenistic religion. A passage in the Hermetic writings defines piety as "the knowledge of God," and another declares that in this alone is salvation for man. If we ask how precisely gnosis is effective for salvation it would no doubt be a partial answer to say that it is "a way of life." It instructs a man with respect to the true nature of the soul, its origin, its bondage, its destiny; it points him to God as the goal of his being, and shows him how by mortification of the flesh and a life of virtue he may tread the upward path. All this, however, conducts only to the threshold of the inner shrine. What works the regenerative change is not instruction, and not self-mortification and virtue — these are only preparatory — it is immediate contact or mystical union with the ineffable God. Gnosis culminates in the

ecstatic vision (θέα) in which the soul, touching the divine, receives the "powers" of God and is itself divinized. "That which is beheld illumines (φωτίζει) the whole inner life, drawing the soul out from the body and transforming it into οὐσία (the divine supersensible substance). The place given to gnosis in Hellenistic religion can be understood only when we keep in view its connection with the mystic vision; and it is in the light of this connection that we must interpret the statement in the Hermetic writings: "This is the blessed issue for those who have attained gnosis that they are transformed into the divine (θεωθῆναι)." From Dr. Kennedy[24] we quote the account of a dialogue between Hermes and his son Tat on the subject of regeneration and the manner in which it is effected. Tat reminds his father that he had told him that no one could be saved without regeneration.[25] Regeneration was only possible to one who had cut himself loose from the world.[26] Tat has renounced the world and entreats his father, who has himself been regenerated, to communicate the secret. Hermes replies that this must be a revelation to the heart by the divine will. By the mercy of God he had seen an immaterial vison inwardly, and had passed out through his body into an immortal body. He is no longer what he was. While Hermes speaks Tat becomes conscious of a transformation. He is set free from the twelve evil propensities, which are replaced by the ten powers of God. He can now declare: "My spirit is illumined. . . . To thee, O God, author of my new creation, I, Tat, offer spiritual sacrifices. O God and Father, thou art the Lord, thou art the Spirit, accept from me the spiritual sacrifices which thou desirest."[27]

Paul, we perceive, is making the comparison between his

[24] *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions.*

[25] *Cf.* Jn. 3:3.

[26] *Cf. Oxyrh. Log.* II.

[27] *Religion and Theology of Paul,* pp. 138–139. The references are to the *Corpus Hermet,* X., 4 and 15, and to Kennedy's *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions,* p. 107. The "spiritual sacrifices" which Tat proposes to offer in thanksgiving for his "new creation" are, of course, a self-dedication corresponding to the "inward worship" (λογικὴ γατρεία) to which Paul exhorts in Rom. 12:1. The effect upon the worshipper of this worship is that he is "metamorphosed" (μεταμορφοῦσθε) from the fashion (σχῆμα) of this world by a renewing of the mind, and thus attains to the beneficent divine purpose.

own apostolic vocation on the one side, when he was given the "illumination" of the "gnosis" of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and on the other the revelation to Moses at Sinai. Must we hold, then, that he conceived of Moses' request to "see the face" of God and its answer as an experience parallel to the ecstatic vision of the adept in the mysteries? Did he conceive of the Mosaic gnosis and its message to the world as resting upon that experience from which Moses returned to the people only after he had put a veil upon his face?

I should hesitate to make any such assertion. It is by no means certain that Paul saw any *direct* parallelism between the divine revelation to Moses at Horeb and the revealing vision of God of Hellenistic religion. *Indirectly,* however, the parallelism is almost certainly intended, if only for the reason that it leads over in the next paragraph (II Cor. 4:7–5:10) to the doctrine of life in death and the immortality which is achieved by the "clothing upon" of the spirit with the indestructible heavenly "house" in place of the "tabernacle" of clay. Whether it were true of Moses or not, Paul feels it to be deeply, sublimely, true in his own case, that God has given him this gnosis and immortality in an "illumination" (φωτισμός) of the inward man by His glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 4:6). In that primary mystical experience he had felt in deep reality all that inward new creation, "transfiguration" (μεταμόρφωσις), and endowment with the divine "powers" of the Spirit, which the mystic claimed. Therefore, in defending "the ministry of the new covenant" as surpassing in glory that of Moses, he purposely employs all the mystical imagery of Hellenistic religion as applying to his own case and that of his fellow-ambassadors for God.

Realizing this unmistakable intention of Paul to use the religious conceptions familiar to his hearers as the vehicle of his own teaching we cannot do better in our attempt to

appreciate the content of his mystical experience than to note what features he makes salient in the Pentateuchal story of Moses' vision of God, aiming thus to interpret his retrospect over his defense of the divine vocation of the "minister of the new covenant." For here, as elsewhere, we are given his own mystical experience in typical form.

In the opening paragraph (3:1–11) Paul contrasts the "ministry" (*διακονία*) of the new covenant with the Mosaic, whose covenant was "written and engraven on stones." The new is a ministry of spirit and life, guaranteed by the covenant in the blood of Jesus. The old, with its curse upon "every one that abideth not in all things that are written in the law to do them" is a "ministry of death." Nevertheless even the Mosaic "came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses, for the glory of his face." This transitory glory, irradiating for the time being the face of Moses when he descended from his vision of God carrying the renewed tables of the law (Ex. 34:1–6, 39–34), thereupon becomes the Apostle's text for an exalted exposition of the unfading glory of the "ministry of justification" (*διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης*).[28] To do full justice to this we must turn back for a moment to the Pentateuchal story of the renewal of the covenant of the law of the Ten Words after the people's apostasy. It begins in Ex. 33:12–23 with Moses' request to *see the face of God* in order that he may "know" Him. In verses 17–23 the entreaty takes the form: "Show me, I pray thee, thy glory." Moses' petition is granted on the ground that he has found grace in Jehovah's sight, and that Jehovah "knows him by name";[29] but with the proviso,

[28] "Righteousness" (A. V. and R. V.) is here, as in the majority of cases an altogether inadequate rendering of the Pauline *δικαιοσύνη*. As the contrasted "ministry of condemnation" (*διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως*, ver. 9) makes plain, acquittal at the judgment seat of God is the object hoped for.

[29] *Cf.* Gal. 4:9; I Cor. 13:12, &c.

"Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live." In order, however, that Moses may have the gnosis indispensable to the teacher of Jehovah's "ways" (ver. 13), he is placed in a cleft of the rock and covered with the divine hand while Jehovah passes by. As he thus gazes upon the "afterglow" (*eth-ahorai*) of the dazzling light a voice proclaims: "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.*"

Paul is fully appreciative of the mingled sublimity and beauty of this culminating Old Testament expression of the revelation of the knowledge of Jehovah as the All-Merciful, the God of Forgiveness. The fact is proved by his adoption of parallel language to describe his own religious experience. He too had been granted an "illumination (φωτισμός) with the light of the gnosis of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"; and the gospel thus conveyed was a gospel of peace and forgiveness, a "ministry of reconciliation (διακονία τῆς καταλλαγῆς)" whereby the All-merciful again proclaimed Himself to the world as propitiated. Its substance was, in Paul's own words, "that God in Christ was reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto men their trespasses," and that he had committed unto the ministry of the new covenant as His ambassadors "the proclamation of this atonement."

But Paul does not stop with this comparison of the two "ministries." While he attests by his very use of the symbolism his profound appreciation of this gnosis of Moses, he does not hesitate to place it on a lower level than his own revelation. And in particular he dwells upon the fact that his own is a ministration of life — life by "illumination" (φωτισμός) and "metamorphosis" through reflection (κατοπτριζόμενοι) of the divine image. In Paul's view the fading of the glory from the face of Moses was a token of the

inferiority of his "ministry." For whereas Moses put a veil upon his face to conceal from Israel its transitoriness (such is the curious interpretation put upon Ex. 34:33–35 in II Cor. 3:13) the glory of the vision of God that is given to the ministry of the new covenant increases from glory to glory, "transfiguring" the very flesh into the likeness of the glorified Lord whose image is reflected upon the "mirror" of the spiritual retina (ver. 18). As with the adept in the mysteries who rejoices that while still in the body he is made partaker of the divine nature by vision of the divinity, so Paul feels that the transfiguring brightness reflected from the image of his glorified Lord, who is "the Spirit" (3:18), changes him into the same likeness.

The superiority of the ministry of the new covenant lies, then, in its conveyance of life. For whereas by common consent it was only the law that was given by Moses, life and immortality were brought to light through the gospel. The new gnosis is a coming to know God, or rather to be known of him, a knowledge which "is eternal life." For no man, not even Moses, had seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, ascended to the bosom of the Father had now revealed Him, being himself "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), so that whoever has seen him has seen the Father. It is in this "Johannine" sense that Paul develops in II Cor. 4:1–5:10 his doctrine of the "transfiguring" vision of Christ which not only guarantees but effects immortality. For it is an essential part of his doctrine of resurrection, in fact its very ground, that "this body of our humiliation must be changed and made like unto the glory-body of Christ" (Phil. 3:10–11, 21). And the method of working is that "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). It is a new creation for humanity; such a new

" dawn " as when God said, Let the light shine out of darkness; though Satan is able to blind the minds of the unbelieving so that the " illumination " of the glory of Christ, the second Adam made " in the image of God," does not dawn upon them.

The very nature of the glory-body is made plain by the nature of Christ's body as it had been beheld in ecstatic vision by Paul together with all the rest of the witnesses (I Cor. 15:1–58). For this vision in the Christian's experience becomes the means of moral transformation. Herein lies in fact the supreme distinction between the Christian mysticism of Paul and the magic of the mystery cults. In so far, then, as this vision of the crucified and risen Lord becomes the means of transformation into his *moral* likeness, a " putting on of the new man which is created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth " (Eph. 4:23–24; Col. 3:10; Rom. 12:2), it is itself the effective means of the new creation. We are raised from the dead with Christ " by means of " (διά) this glory of the Father to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), so that in thus becoming conformed to the likeness of the heavenly Man by the renewing of our minds (I Cor. 15:45–49; Rom. 12:2) we accomplish the good and acceptable and perfect will of the Creator. For to this end He sent this Second Adam as " lifegiving Spirit " to become the First-born of a new race of redeemed immortals (Rom. 8:29).

It cannot and will not be denied that Paul's doctrine of immortality was not derived from Moses. The doctrine belongs to the Greek period of Judaism and comes in as the distinctive tenet of Pharisaism. But while Paul as " a Pharisee of Pharisees " (Phil. 3:5) undoubtedly took over in large part the form of Pharisean belief, the positive basis of his resurrection faith and gospel was his own mystical experience, his vision of the risen and glorified Jesus. Those who remember the exalted pæan of victorious spiritual life,

triumphant over the law of sin and death in Rom. 8: 1–39 will not need to be told of the moral value attached by Paul to his religio-mystical experience. To countless millions through fifty generations that experience has been the supreme expression of the victory of the higher nature in man, that nature which " thinks it was not born to die," over the lower. It would be waste of words to enlarge upon the " value to the life of others " of what Paul refers to, now as his " new creation," now as his being " raised from the dead," now as being transformed, or " metamorphosed " into the image of Christ, by the " renewing of his mind." This value is as undisputed as it is independent of the particular mode or form under which Paul conceived the psychological process of " regeneration " and " transfiguration " or " conformation to the image of the Son of God " (Rom. 8: 29). We have already recalled the saving and distinctively Christian element of the Pauline mysticism to be its unqualified subjection to the acid test of the intellectual and moral judgment. If our survey of Paul's own interpretation of his experiences has value to the psychological critic it will not chiefly lie in renewed emphasis laid upon this conceded religious and practical value, indestructible as long as man's inward struggle toward the higher ideals of his spiritual and moral nature endures, even were its whole conceptual form and mode of apprehension in Paul's mind illusive. It will lie rather in the interpretative connection we have sought to establish between these Pauline modes of apprehension, and those of current Hellenistic or " mystery " religion.

In particular we must look at Paul's application of his doctrine of life in the Spirit to the death in life of the true " minister of the new covenant " in II Cor. 4: 7–6: 10, bringing it into line with earlier and later expressions of his doctrine of " transfiguration " into the image of the glorified Son, such as Rom. 6: 4–5; 8: 11, 23, 29; I Cor. 15: 35–54; Phil. 3: 20–21. We must appreciate how here in II

Cor. 4:7–15 Paul's description of his "constant bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal flesh" (II Cor. 4:10; cf. Rom. 8:11) fits on to his reference in the preceding paragraph (II Cor. 3:18–4:6) to the inward "illumination" and "transfiguration" into the "likeness of the Son of God," whose glory was "mirrored" in the eye of his soul. Especially must we note the allusion at its close to the "new creation" for the world as well as for his own soul, which had "dawned" in his mystical vision of "the face of Jesus Christ." For this conception of the eternal life of "things invisible" triumphing through a "voluntary death" is continued in verses 16–18. Moreover in the opening paragraph of the next chapter (5:1–10) it develops into a discussion of the "heavenly house," an indestructible "building of God" with which we are to be "clothed upon" when our "earthly tabernacles" decay. Finally this immortality, guaranteed by the gift of the Spirit, an "immortality in the image of God's own being," is declared to be the divine purpose in the creation. For a predecessor of Paul in the adaptation of the Hellenistic doctrine of immortality through vision of the divine image had also declared that

> God created man for incorruption
> And made him an image (εἴκων) of his own proper being.[30]

In all this defense of the "ministry," therefore, Paul is simply interpreting his vision of the glorified Lord and its retroactive effect in terms of Hellenistic religion.

It is the task of the psychological rather than the historical and literary critic to draw the boundary line between subjective and objective in this mystical experience of Paul. For our present undertaking let it suffice to have made clearer (if our effort has not been in vain), how Paul applied these

[30] Sap. 2:23; *cf.* II Cor. 3:18; 5:5.

current conceptions to a spiritual experience which he was one of many to share with Peter and the other companions of Jesus; and that he and they together secured the triumph of Jesus' cause, the transfer to humanity of that ideal of the Kingdom of God for which Jesus suffered his martyrdom, because they endowed their vision of the exalted and glorified "Lord" with the moral qualities of the Servant of Jehovah who had "humbled himself and become obedient unto death, yea, even the death of the cross."

# THE MYSTICISM OF AUGUSTINE

WILLISTON WALKER

So preëminent were Augustine's services in the development of Christian doctrine that our first thought of him is as a theologian. His controversies with Donatists and Pelagians, his explications of the Trinity, of grace, of predestination and of the sacraments were so formative for later Christian thought that they naturally stand in the forefront in our recollection of him. To those who immediately succeeded him Augustine appeared no less distinguished as a propagator of monasticism. But with all his other claims to distinction Augustine must remain always one of the greatest of Christian mystics, and no small part of his permanent influence has been the fruit of the mystical spirit which inspired and animated his writings generally, but was nowhere more evident than in his *Confessions*.

Augustine's *Confessions* are the most remarkable spiritual autobiography that the ancient world produced, and have never been surpassed in any period of Christian history. They are far from a complete story of his life. They end with the death of his mother, in this thirty-third year. He was to live till nearly seventy-six. They omit many details of employment and relationships in the years that they cover that the reader would gladly have had preserved. The main facts of spiritual and intellectual development stand forth, however, in transparent clearness. The *Confessions* exhibit with utmost fidelity his moral defeats, his philosophical and religious wanderings, his intellectual and spiritual struggles, and his transforming experience. No leader of the ancient

Church is known to us, in the deeper recesses of his soul, with anything of comparable completeness.

Augustine's convictions were determined in large measure by his experience. In him two natures were conjoined, of diverse tendencies. He was marked, from earliest manhood, by a hot-blooded impetuosity, inherited perhaps from his easy-going, long heathen father, which manifested itself in sensuality. When little more than sixteen he contracted a concubinous relation to which he was to hold for years. At the same time his deeply spiritual and intellectual nature could find no abiding satisfaction in the gratifications of the flesh, and Cicero's *Hortensius,* which came into his hands in his nineteenth year, convinced him that in the search for truth the only permanent satisfactions are to be found. It was, it may well have been, an inheritance from his spiritual-minded mother. Thenceforth the two natures were in constant struggles within him, and victory came long to neither. His better self loathed his lower appetites, but he was unable to shake off their control. He was wretched in heart. "I, miserable young man, supremely miserable even in the very outset of my youth, had entreated chastity of Thee, and said: 'Grant me chasity and continency, but not yet.'" [1]

In these torments he turned to the Scriptures for help, but the barbarous Latinity of the old versions then current repelled him. "They appeared to me unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Cicero;" [2] and his pride of will was not as yet to be bent to their characteristic virtue of humility. "I scorned to be a little one, and, swollen with pride, I looked upon myself as a great one." [3]

No wonder that in this divided and wretched state he was attracted by the then widely prevalent Manichæism. The system of Mani, though always frowned upon by the Roman

[1] *Confessions,* 8:7.
[2] *Confessions,* 3:5.
[3] *Confessions,* 3:5.

authorities, had the force that always inheres, for earnest minds, impressed with the depth of actual or potential human depravity, in a dualistic explanation of the universe. To Manichæan thought, good and evil are eternal realities, both positive existences, and in unending conflict, with man a creature in both camps, and his everlasting control a prize of victory. While evil is spiritual, its chief domain is that of matter. "I believed evil to be a sort of substance, and to be possessed of its own foul and misshapen mass,— whether dense, which they denominated earth, or thin and subtle, as is the body of the air, which they fancy some malignant spirit crawling through the earth. And because a piety, such as it was, compelled me to believe that the good God never created any evil nature, I conceived two masses, the one opposed to the other, both infinite, but the evil the more contracted, the good the more expansive." [4] Such a view tends to place evil not in a responsible wrongfulness of disposition, but to regard it as something inevitably bound up in the dual constitution of men,— body and spirit,— to be fought indeed, but rather hopelessly as long as man is in the bondage of the flesh. While man must struggle against evil, he is hardly responsible for its existence in his own nature. For some nine years Augustine remained satisfied with this explanation of his moral perplexities. Yet Manichæanism did not hold him. He came to question its adequacy, and fell into a state of skepticism, "doubting of everything and fluctuating between all." [5]

Meanwhile Augustine was succeeding in his profession of teacher of rhetoric, and had secured an excellent post in Milan. Here two new forces came into his life. It is difficult to say which was the more influential. One was the preaching of Ambrose, the great bishop of Milan, a man about fifteen years older than Augustine, and now in the full

[4] *Confessions*, 5 : 10.
[5] *Confessions*, 5 : 14.

tide of his remarkable ministry. To his sermons Augustine went, at first, as an eager taster of pulpit eloquence; but Ambrose soon won his intellectual respect for the message, and under his impress the authority of the Church and the meaning of Scripture came to have new significance. He began to commit Ambrose's sayings to heart; but he would not yet yield himself to the guidance of the preacher. "All this time I restrained my heart from assenting to anything . . . for my desire was to be as well assured of these things that I saw not, as I was that seven and three are ten." [6]

Augustine might have continued in this state of skeptical indecision had it not been for a second influence that now came into his life — that of Neoplatonism. It is doubtless true, that in Neoplatonism the ancient world reached its highest ethical idealism. It was eminently mystical in its view. Above all, the source of all reality, is the simple, infinite Being, the source of all good, and that from which all is derived. From it all the multiform existence that constitutes this complex universe descends in gradations of diminishing completeness, but each deriving whatever of reality it possesses from the great Being which is the source of all. All derived being, if it fulfills the law of its nature, tends to aspire to communion and union with that Being which is the ultimate reality. As Augustine expressed it: "I looked back on other things, and I perceived that it was to Thee they owed their being, and that they were all bounded in Thee." [7] "I viewed the other things below Thee, and perceived that they neither altogether are, nor altogether are not. They are, indeed, because they are from Thee; but are not, because they are not what Thou art. For that truly is which remains immutably. It is good, then, for me to cleave unto God, for if I remain not in Him, neither shall I in myself, but He, remaining in Himself, reneweth all things." [8]

[6] *Confessions*, 6:4.
[7] *Confessions*, 7:15.
[8] *Confessions*, 7:11

Here was a view of the nature of God and of the universe that was well fitted to wean Augustine from his skepticism and remaining Manichæism. To him God was now the source of all reality anywhere. All as it came from God is good. Evil is nothing self-existent and positive, as in Manichæism. It is a privation, a defect, a lack of goodness. It is a frustration of the normal desire to find the highest good in God, to turn towards Him. "I inquired what iniquity was, and ascertained it not to be a substance, but a perversion of the will, bent aside from Thee, O God, the Supreme Substance, toward these lower things."[9] Neoplatonism thenceforth largely determined Augustine's philosophic interpretation of God, sin, and the highest good. The philosophic basis of his mysticism was laid.

Augustine, however, saw the limitations of Neoplatonism no less clearly. It had not the definiteness that comes from allegiance to a person. Its supreme reality and highest good remained remote and indefinite until revealed in a person, as in Christianity. "I sought a way of acquiring strength sufficient to enjoy Thee; but I found it not until I embraced that 'Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.'"[10]

Yet Augustine's sensual nature still held him in bondage. Though now intellectually convinced of the truth of Christianity, by Ambrose's preaching, by Neoplatonism and by the reading especially of Paul, his will did not yet follow. "I did not grasp my Lord Jesus,— I, though humbled, grasped not the humble One"[11] He dismissed his faithful concubine. He entered an engagement that promised an advantageous marriage; but as the union must be delayed on account of the youth of his betrothed, he took another mistress. He loathed his weakness, but felt no strength in

[9] *Confessions*, 7:16.
[10] *Confessions*, 7:18.
[11] *Confessions*, 7:18.

himself to overcome it. He was distracted, ashamed and wretched.

In his perplexities Augustine now sought Simplicianus, a Christian to whom Ambrose had been deeply indebted spiritually. Simplicianus sympathized with his studies in Neoplatonism, and told him of the Christian profession, in old age, of Victorinus, whose Latin translation of Neoplatonic works had been Augustine's introduction to a knowledge of that philosophy. It was the sacrifice of scholastic pride involved in Victorinus's Christian profession that most impressed the scholarly inquirer. "When that man of Thine, Simplicianus, related this to me about Victorinus I burned to imitate him." [12] "Thus came I to understand, from my own experience, what I had read, how that 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.'" [13]

Augustine's release was not yet come. A traveled fellow-African Christian, in high government office, Pontitianus, now called on Augustine and his friend Alypius. He found Augustine, to his surprise, reading Paul. The talk turned toward monasticism, then in its early vigor in Egypt and spreading thence to other parts of the empire. Pontitianus had many interesting things to tell, as they sat together in the garden; but what impressed and humiliated Augustine was that these unlettered monks could overcome temptations which, he, a man of learning, found himself unable to resist. "I seized upon Alypius and exclaimed: What is wrong with us? What is this? What heardest thou? The unlearned start up and take heaven, and we, with our learning, but wanting heart, see where we wallow in flesh and blood." [14] The inward struggle intensified. Augustine longed to be freed from the chains of habit, yet the old life still had something of its spell. It whispered, as he thought of its old sat-

[12] *Confessions,* 8:5.
[13] *Confessions,* 8:5.
[14] *Confessions,* 8:8.

isfactions: "Dost thou think that thou canst live without them?" But the longing for spiritual freedom was the stronger. He prayed, flinging himself beneath a fig-tree in the garden. "Not indeed in these words, yet to this effect, spake I much unto Thee: 'But Thou, O Lord, how long? . . . How long? To-morrow and to-morrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end of my uncleanliness?" [15]

Augustine's nature was convulsed by a crisis of utmost violence of emotion. What followed may best be told in his own words: [16]

"I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighboring house, chanting and oft repeating: 'Take up and read; take up and read.' Immediately my countenance was changed, and I began most earnestly to consider whether it was usual for children in any kind of game to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, restraining the torrent of my tears, I rose up, interpreting it in no other way than as a command to me from heaven to open the book, and to read the first chapter I should light upon. . . . So quickly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there I had put down the volume of the Apostles when I rose thence. I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell: 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof' (*Romans* 13:13, 14). No further would I read, nor did I need, for instantly, as the sentence ended,—by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart,—all the gloom of doubt vanished away."

To Augustine it was an abiding and life-long transformation. It involved the forgiveness of his sins; but it was a boon far greater than that. It freed his will from its pre-

[15] *Confessions,* 8:12.
[16] *Confessions,* 8:12.

vious bondage, and infused power now to turn from all lower aims to God. God had wrought, by almighty power, a transformation in him which no strength of his own could have effected. From this standpoint of a divinely effected renewal of will,— a rescue from bondage,— Augustine henceforth viewed salvation. His nature was set free for that delight in God for which he had been made.

The student of mystical experiences has noted Augustine's conviction that the voice like that of a child heard by him was divinely sent. It was an "audition." Yet he must have been impressed also with the simple and unadorned way in which Augustine narrates the incident. Augustine was not incredulous of the miraculous. He believed that miracles, even the cure of blindness [17] and raising from the dead,[18] had taken place, not infrequently, in his own days. In the account of his own crucial experience he speaks with a brevity and directness that carry conviction that the event was absolutely real to him and has been fully told. Whatever weight may be laid upon the intensity of the emotional struggle through which Augustine was passing as explaining his experience, there can be no doubt that he believed that he heard the command, "Take up and read"; and was convinced that the admonition was of divine origin. That the voice was that of a child in ordinary play, and the experience that of a coincidence, was a thought that occurred to Augustine himself, only to be rejected by him because he knew of no game in which such words were used. Whether or no the modern investigator will think coincidence the true explanation will probably depend on his temperament and prepossessions.

Thenceforth, for Augustine, God is not only the basis of all reality; He is the center of all true life. In comparison with Him all is emptiness and shadow. "Thou

[17] *Confessions*, 9:7.
[18] *City of God*, 22:8.

hast formed us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee," [19] is a phrase in which Augustine summed up his mystic view of man's true relation to God. It is Neoplatonism in an interpretation of Christian experience. "The happy life is this,— to rejoice unto Thee, in Thee, and for Thee; this it is, and there is no other." [20] This mystical sense of God, not divined from logical demonstration, but from an immediate consciousness of His relation to the human soul, was Augustine's most abiding contribution to the interpretation of religion. It is one that makes religion in its last analysis not a belief, not an intellectual conviction, not a rule of life, though all these flow from religion, but a personal relationship. From this new relationship between the soul and God, right conduct necessarily ensues. "This was the result, that I willed not to do what I willed, but willed to do what Thou willedst." [21] Augustine came to his goal through many wanderings and much anguish of spirit; but that goal, when reached, was nothing less than a knowledge of God, an enjoyment of God, and an over-ruling of his will by that of God, which were to him abiding joy, contentment and rest. This experience he mediated to those who came after him, and therefore Augustine has never ceased to be a power in the Christian church far beyond the acceptance of his theological interpretations. This experience was fundamentally mystical, and Augustine therefore deserves to rank among the greatest of the Christian mystics.

[19] *Confessions,* 1:1.
[20] *Confessions,* 10:21.
[21] *Confessions,* 9:1.

# MYSTICISM IN ISLAM

CHARLES CUTLER TORREY

## I

Students of Islam have expressed widely different views as to the extent to which mysticism enters into it as a characteristic element. Some have asserted that it is of all the great religions of the world the one in which mysticism holds the smallest place, and that the so-called Mohammedan mystics — who are many — really stand, and have always stood, outside the circle of genuine Mohammedanism. Others, coming from a study of the practice of the religion rather than of its theory, have said that every devout Muslim is a true mystic. Each of these two extreme statements has its justification, but the latter comes much nearer the truth than the former.

Orthodox Mohammedanism does rest, formally, on a single strange book and the personal example of the peculiar man who was its author, that is, on the Koran and the Sunna; and it is certain that neither of the two seems well fitted to call forth that variety of religious experience in which the worshipper draws very near to God, whether in contemplation or in emotion. On the other hand, no great religion can be limited to the pattern of its beginnings, nor to the content of its formal orthodoxy.

Several factors have combined, in varying measure, to produce this type of religious experience in Islam. First, there is the faith as it has developed along its main traditional lines, from century to century, presenting a more or less homogeneous body of belief and experience shared in by the typical Muslim. Islam had its own mystics even in

its least promising days, when it was still the crude faith of Arab tribes. Moreover, it can be shown that the Koran and the life of the Prophet, even in the light of critical study, provide more than a germ of mysticism, though generally far enough removed from this attitude of mind and heart.

Other factors needing to be taken into account are local or racial tendencies and customs, for Islam has spread far and taken on many shades of color. The various eastern lands possess their distinct types of thought and emotion, which no superimposed religion can greatly affect. The Greek is religious in a Greek way, whatever the nature of his creed. A native of China thinks and feels as a Chinaman, whether he is a Buddhist, a Methodist, or a Muslim. As for the Arab, if his theology sometimes looks like elementary mathematics, his religion often seems like wildfire. Persia and India, as will appear, made their characteristic contributions to that side of Mohammedan thought and life with which we are here concerned. Another factor from the outside is the influence of other religions. Christianity, in particular, has been potent in encouraging and shaping Mohammedan mysticism, both through its philosophy and still more through the example of its hermits and saints.

Lastly, there is the universal tendency of the human soul in its devout moods. This factor, the need of human nature everywhere, has played a more important part in this religious development than we often realize. It can produce, and has in fact produced, a true mysticism of some sort on every kind of Mohammedan soil, in the natural development of the faith with its important by-products. We look for what might be expected as the fruit of Islam, and generally find it; but along with it we often see the religion of a deep inner experience, with all its warmth and excitement. It is interesting to see how this was sometimes brought forward in mediæval Islam, as in mediæval

Christianity, by the reaction against extreme scholasticism.

As for Mohammed himself, his habitual attitude of mind was not at all that of a mystic; and he is ordinarily included in discussions of this particular subject chiefly by reason of certain remarkable psychic phenomena which are characteristic of that elusive being Mohammed the Prophet rather than of Mohammed the Muslim. The story of his visions and dreams certainly belongs to the literature of mysticism, and is a highly interesting example of its kind. It can hardly be omitted here, though it is not possible to do more than touch upon the subject very briefly.

Mohammed, like not a few other of the foremost religious leaders of history, was gifted with a nervous disorder of some sort, the effect of which appeared in various ways. We know that during his public career, that is, from the year 611 or 612 A. D., when he was about forty years old, to the year of his death, 632, he was subject to peculiar seizures, which have sometimes been regarded as epileptic but probably were of a less serious nature. These fits, in regard to which we have the abundant but exaggerated and often plainly untrustworthy testimony of his contemporaries, originally played an important part in the experiences which convinced him that he was given a divine message to his people, and in subsequent times seem regularly to have been connected in some way with the successive utterances which make up the Koran. Whether he had experienced any such seizures in his earlier years we are not informed; but if not actually produced for the first time they must at least have been given a new power by the intense nervous excitement under which he labored for some time previous to his first " revelation."

Mohammed's mind was filled with certain ideas which he had obtained directly or indirectly from Jews and Christians: One God, the creator of man and of all things; sin, divine wrath, and the judgment day; heaven and hell; a written

revelation sent from God to man for his guidance; a succession of prophets, through whom the messages are sent. Over these ideas he brooded, while his agitation was increased by the fasting and vigils which the well-known habit of Christian ascetics had recommended to him. It was then that there came upon him such attacks as were ordinarily attributed, among the Arabs of his time, to possession by jinns, but which he soon felt certain were manifestations of the power of God working in him, and the means of inspiring him to utter divine messages. The Jews and Christians had been favored in the past; the time had now come for the Arabs to be given their own revelation, and he, Mohammed, was the chosen instrument. The fits were a heaven-sent gift, and it seems quite plain that at this time they came upon him unawares, as the result of his nervous condition; the nature of their continuance in after years — how far they were involuntary and how far encouraged or reproduced by his own excited volition — must remain a matter of conjecture. It is not difficult to suppose that such a physical aptitude, once established, could eventually become a habit, to be called upon whenever the circumstances required. This hypothesis agrees best with the mass of testimony which has come down to us, and especially with what we find in every part of the Koran. We can hardly doubt that a certain apparatus of revelation was very soon recognized by Mohammed, and that it continued to be employed throughout his career, the only variation being presumably in the degree of intensity which the nervous excitement reached.

It is sufficiently obvious that the vast majority of Mohammed's outgivings in the Koran were neither produced nor fostered by any trance-like condition. On the other hand, every reader must recognize that their author was not one to whom composition was easy; even the most commonplace and matter-of-fact of his utterances were the fruit of tra-

vail. The effort which produced them always had in it something abnormal. To the day of his death he seems never to have doubted for a moment that he was a prophet, gifted with a prophet's special privileges; his mental processes, when he was speaking as God's mouthpiece, were not like those of other men, but were divinely directed. After the emotional paroxysm, through which he believed himself to receive illumination from above, followed a struggle with the ideas and phrases of the message, until at last it was worked into shape. Whatever form of words Mohammed thus decided upon was the one to which he was guided by the angel of revelation; of this he was fully persuaded. Every single verse of his book was a "heavenly sign" (*āya*).

To the earliest period of Mohammed's self-consciousness as a prophet belong certain visions in regard to which we are so fortunate as to have the testimony of his own words, in the Koran. The experiences to which he alludes appear to have been genuine hallucinations, in which he believed himself to see clearly with the bodily eye "things not lawful to be uttered" (as St. Paul says of his own experience). Certainly he entertained no doubt that the heavenly visitor (Gabriel) actually came to him in some visible form. The first of the passages of this nature is *Sura* (Chapter) 81 : 19–24. *Verily, this* (i. e., the teaching here given forth) *is the word of a noble Messenger; * one who has power and influence with the Lord of the Throne* (i e., God himself). * . . . *Your companion* (i. e., Mohammed) *is not demented; * nay, he indeed saw him there, in full view, on the horizon.*

The second passage, which mentions two different visions, is a little more circumstantial and characterized by a truly dramatic vividness, in spite of its obscurity. Sura 53 : 1–18: *By the star when it fell! * Your companion was not mistaken nor in error, * nor is he speaking out of his own fancy. * Nay, this was naught else than a revelation, * given*

*him by a mighty one, * one endued with power; who balanced himself, * there, just above the horizon; * then he drew near, and nearer, * until he was distant only two bows'-lengths, or less. * Then he revealed to his servant that which he revealed. * The mind was not deceived in what it saw; * will ye dispute with him regarding that which his eyes beheld? * Yea, he saw him come down on another occasion, * by the sidra tree, at the boundary, * near the garden of resort; * when there covered the tree that which covered it. * The eye did not wander, nor was it deceived; * nay, he saw some of the great signs of his Lord.*

Mohammed's first meeting with the angel of revelation had come in the form of a dream. For the account of this happening we are dependent on the Prophet's *reported* words, but the corroborating evidence is strong and has generally been so regarded. Mohammed knew very well what utterance in the Koran was the oldest and formed its beginning; this was a thing that he could never have forgotten. The members of his family, his first disciples, the increasing company of his devoted adherents through a period of twenty years, must have felt an intense interest in this very question, and we have only the one oft-repeated tradition. Moreover the account, when compared with the corresponding passage in the Koran, bears internal marks of truth as far as the main facts are concerned; doubtless some of the details are the result of later embellishment.

Like some other earnest Arabs of his own time and many of a later day, Mohammed had occasionally gone out alone into the neighboring wilderness for several days at a time, in imitation of the Christian monks, who were known to receive supernatural power through this mode of life. There was a cave in the rugged mountain above Mekka, and in this he took refuge. One night, when he was sleeping there, the angel Gabriel suddenly stood before him, bearing a strip of silk on which some words were written. "Read!" com-

manded the angel. But Mohammed, to whom reading and writing were probably laborious processes at best, and who was badly frightened into the bargain, declined. "I cannot," he said. Thereupon his visitor laid hold of him and wound the silk about his face and throat so tightly that he could hardly breathe. Then, releasing him, he said again, "Read!" Mohammed answered as before, and again the angel choked him with the cloth until he was almost suffocated. Letting him go at last, he said for the third time, "Read!" Then poor Mohammed, with the one thought of postponing the choking process as long as possible, stammered out, "What shall I read?" The answer was the first Arabic revelation, that which was to be the beginning of the Koran (96: 1–5): *Read! In the name of thy Lord, who created; * created man from a blood-clot. * Read! for thy Lord is the most gracious one; * who taught man to write with the pen; * taught him what he had not known.* Mohammed repeated these words, whereupon Gabriel vanished. "Then," Mohammed is reported to have said, "I awoke, and it seemed as though the words had been written on my heart with an iron pen."

The Prophet and his followers of course looked upon this as a supernatural occurrence, a real visit of the angel Gabriel; we, however, may see in it the tolerably accurate record of an ordinary nightmare. The sudden apparition, the physical distress like suffocation, the words which cling to the memory, the awaking at the climax of the dream, are all very familiar. As for the few sentences which Gabriel recited, they are as commonplace, and as imperfectly connected, as such oracles by dream are apt to be. They concern matters with which Mohammed's soul was then tormented, particularly the idea of a written teaching inspired from heaven. It is also significant that the five successive phrases are couched in the rhymed prose in which the native soothsayers, or *kāhins* — something like the tribal "medi-

cine men" of the American Indians — had been accustomed to give forth their charms and other oracular utterances. Mohammed must often have thought of this form of discourse as the traditionally *Arabian* garb of prophecy. From this time on he employed it, and Gabriel (whose ear for rhyme, it would seem, was not quite perfect) always gave him the needed assistance.

Subsequent dreams and apparitions said to have been experienced by Mohammed are of minor consequence, and have no such authentication as those above described. It is to be noted that there was no vision of Allah, but only of Allah's messenger, with whom the Prophet throughout the remainder of his life continued to feel himself in close touch.

As has already been said, these experiences of the nascent Prophet of the Arabs are merely a part of his peculiar personal history, and have little or no bearing on the religious life of the ordinary Muslim. When our inquiry concerns mysticism in the ordinary connotation, that introspective, self-devoting, emotional variety of religion in which the worshipper strives after, and feels that he achieves, a close personal relation with the Divine Spirit, we certainly do not expect to find it prominent in this crude Arabian system of belief and practice. Mohammed's mind was of a meditative, brooding type, but not introspective nor capable of philosophizing. His formulation of Islam is typically objective and concrete, practical and with little of the emotional element; the idea of communion with God seems hardly present in it. The Allah of the Koran generally makes on the reader the impression of a magnified Mekkan merchant removed to an infinite distance from mankind. The first person singular, used either of God or of his worshipper, hardly occurs in the Koran at all; the only direct and unmediated address to God by the worshipper (in the first person plural) is in the brief opening chapter. The attitude of mind in which the devotee speaks out of a personal intimacy

with the deity is generally quite foreign to the book. We see no emphasis laid on the "spiritual life" or the "care of the soul." So far as would appear from the Koran, the spiritual life is a matter of small concern. The Muslim is not required to care for his soul. In embracing the new faith he may need to change his mind, but not his heart. There is no catechuminate in the Islam of the Koran. If we look for something to correspond to the passionate quest of the personified Wisdom, in the Hebrew scriptures, the dearest companion, to whom the lover clings, when he has found her; or to such mystical figures in the New Testament as the bread and water of life, or the vine and the branches; we shall search in vain. These things are all remote from Mohammed's teaching. Some striking utterances of the sort appear in the orthodox Tradition, to be sure — thanks to the Sūfi traditionists who put them there.

But we shall certainly go astray if we try to measure Mohammed's own "Islam" by the Koran. From the fact that he says very little about religious emotion, whether his own or that of others, it is indeed a fair inference that this played a minor part in his conception of the faith; but we are not warranted in assuming that what we have before us in the singular book is anything like a sufficient record of his personal religious experience. Neither he nor his earliest zealous adherents — hot-blooded orientals, always easily moved and desiring to be moved — could have been satisfied with a service which had in it no passionate devotion. They found in fact in Islam what they desired and needed to find; that, moreover, which truly had formed a part of it from the beginning.

Mohammed was not a man of many words; we receive everywhere the impression that he was one who was wont to listen and think while others talked. It is not his habit to reveal himself in the Koran, though he very often does so involuntarily, where we can read between the lines. He

does not present to view, save by occasional hints, the struggles, aspirations, and exultation of the Muslim; partly, no doubt, because of the difficulty of expressing himself, but partly also because by disposition he was reserved and sparing in his utterances. He was more at home in dealing with facts than with feelings. It does not appear that he ever encouraged his followers to unbosom themselves to the public in confessions or homilies, beyond the simple repetition of what was provided for them in his revealed book. Long-winded helpers he could dispense with. The saying attributed to him: "the length of a man's prayer and the shortness of his sermon are the signs of his understanding," gives at least a true impression of both his preference and his own practice. In view of this habitual reticence it is all the more noteworthy that we do find in the Koran occasional passages which have in them something like the lyrical depth and pathos of the Hebrew Psalmists when they say: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling," or even this: "As the hart pants for the running brooks, so my soul thirsts for Thee." Thus the soliloquy in 93:5 ff.: *Verily thy Lord will grant thee favor, and show thee mercy. * Did He not find thee an orphan, and give thee a home? * Did He not find thee wandering, and guide thee? * Yea, He found thee poor, and made thee prosperous. * Deal not harshly, then, with the orphan, * and turn not away him who comes enquiring. * And as for the kindness of thy Lord, proclaim it! ** And again, a very similar passage, 94:1 ff.: *"Did we not open thy heart? * and take from thy back the galling load? * and give thee a better name? * Verily, along with trouble comes relief; * yea, along with trouble comes relief! * Then when thou art at liberty, be zealous, * and eagerly desire thy Lord. **

Obviously, this is no far distant God. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that in not a few passages the Prophet,

contradicting the plain impression given by his ordinary utterances, asserts emphatically that God is near at hand, close to the worshipper, closer even than any human being can be. 58:8: *There is no secret conference of three in which He is not the fourth, nor of five in which He is not the sixth. Be the number less or more, He is with them wherever they are.* 50:15: *We created man, We know what his soul whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.* 2:109: *Whichever way ye turn, there is God's face.*

The Prophet is fond of the phrase: "eager desire for the face of God," using the same verb-root that is employed in the exhortation "eagerly desire thy Lord," quoted above. In the strength supplied by this motive the Muslim gives his alms liberally, endures persecution for the faith, and offers all that he has, including his life, for the cause of Allah (2:274; 13:22; 92:20). Whatever the scholastic theologians might make of this "face," it is certain that to the ordinary believer it signified the veritable and visible person of God. I have no doubt that this is what the phrase meant to Mohammed himself, as he repeated it. We may also compare such a passage as 55:26 f.: *Every one on earth must pass away, but the majestic, glorious face of thy Lord shall endure.* Here was material for mysticism. Degrees of approach to the divine presence in the next life are hinted at in more than one passage, especially in the phrase "those who are brought near (to God)," the word being the same which is used elsewhere in speaking of the angels, and of Jesus the son of Mary. Thus in 83:18, 21 there is mention of *the Book of the righteous . . . those nigh to God shall witness it.* Here was food for the popular conception of sainthood, sure to develop very soon.

The assembling of these passages and others of the same character makes it plain that the Koran, though a text-book of all that is external, rigid, and rudely manufactured in theology, has yet its portions in which genuine religious

fervor comes to the surface. Primitive Islam is "child-like" not only in its crude ignorance, but also in its frequent manifestation of a simple, warm faith. The Arab who was inclined to be religious — and there were many such, the first two caliphs, Abu Bekr and Omar, among them — would surely be moved as he listened to the passages quoted above, carried them away in his memory, and said them over and over to himself. The fervent mood would be encouraged by the ever-recurring formula, "the merciful Compassionate One," and by the earnest, intimate petitions of the Muslim's "Lord's Prayer": *Thee we serve, and Thee we ask for help; * lead us in the right way, * the way of those to whom Thou art gracious.* * In the face of such words as these, no dogma could persuade that Allah was far away or hard to reach.

It must be remembered also that there is an important source of excitement, of a kind that can contribute to religious emotion, in the literary form of the Koran, with its musical rhythm and its rhymed verse-endings. The Arabs had a remarkably acute sense of rhythm, and were easily moved by the sound of poetry. In the tales of the Aghānī or the Thousand and One Nights, or still other collections, it is a commonplace that the hero or heroine, or perhaps a mere bystander, falls to the ground in a swoon on hearing a fine poem recited. From the testimony of native writers and the experience of modern times we know that there was no great exaggeration in this. Mohammed had the Arab's feeling for the sound of words and the cadence of the phrase; in general, his rhetorical instinct was strong. The early *sūras* (chapters) of the Koran are all made up of short and vigorous sentences, often truly thrilling in their eloquence. They were to be recited aloud, not read silently, and everywhere the sound plays its important part; many passages which in translation are merely futile or almost ridiculous have in the original Arabic a splendid resonance. These

were utterances not easily forgotten when heard, and they were remembered all the more readily because of the rhyme. Some striking verses are many times repeated in different places, and in two or three of the suras a single phrase is carried through as a regular refrain. There is varied strong emotion in all this earlier part of the book: conviction of sin, terror, hope, joy, burning zeal and fierce indignation, aspiration, and an affectionate trust in the Merciful Helper which needed little added stimulus in order to become truly passionate. Through the act of reciting or chanting these divinely given verses, the Muslim of the most devout type was sure to be powerfully stirred.

An incident which may be taken as typical is narrated in a tradition of which Abu Bekr is the principal figure. The time was shortly before the hijra, when some of Mohammed's followers were driven out of Mekka by determined persecution. Abu Bekr, who was a mild, conciliatory man and a good citizen, was allowed to remain unmolested under the condition that he should enjoy his new religion indoors, and not make it a public nuisance. But he soon found it convenient to make a praying-place in his back yard (as we should say), and there at length he appeared daily, reciting the Koran and repeating its prayers, while his voice broke and the tears streamed down his cheeks; observed all the time with breathless interest by an audience of Mekkan women and children, who stood as near as they dared. Whether the story is true or not (it comes from his daughter Ayesha, whose imagination sometimes outstrips her memory), it at least shows how the reading of the Koran was supposed to affect a pious and susceptible man. Many other traditions and anecdotes describe similarly the devotions of other prominent Muslims of the earliest time.

Again and again, and with marked emphasis, Mohammed urges his followers *to pray;* to pray often, and continuously, and with fervor. These injunctions of the Koran

have been most influential in promoting a mystical type of religion; they also show us something of the inner side of the Prophet's own life, a phase of his personal religious experience of which we can say with certainty that it meant much both to him and to his adherents, and yet in regard to which our only satisfactory testimony is indirect. He was just the man to be carried away by religious emotion, quite apart from the prophetic paroxysms in which he sought and found the impulse to his inspired utterances. Prayer is solitude, and in the still hours of the night, he especially recommends it to those who are looking for "the guidance." Thus for example the Koran, 50:39: *Through the night celebrate his praise;* and again, 51:17 f.: *The pious . . . little of the night they slept, and at the dawn they prayed for forgiveness.* In general, his own private devotions were noted both for their length and for their uninterrupted intensity. A saying attributed to him: "The best worship is the most secret," which may be seen inscribed in decorative characters on the gloriously colored tiles of many a mosque, is certainly in accord with numerous passages in the Koran.

No one familiar with the evidence of Mohammed's personal influence and with the spirit of his earliest followers — the "Companions"— could doubt that there were those who obeyed these divine injunctions to the limit of their physical endurance. The oldest tales of the Muslim community show us not a few men seeking long and earnestly after a religious experience, in the same way that the devotees of other faiths have sought. It was not merely that they wanted to be better men; they were persuaded that they needed, and could have, some sort of communion with Allah, and they were wont to spend some part of every twenty-four hours alone with him. The most primitive traditions, supported by the Koran, put this fact quite beyond doubt. Of course such men were exceptional; yet they were a fruit of Islam. There are many characteristic anecdotes of public

men, such as Saīd ibn Āmir, the governor of Emesa under the caliph Omar, who attended faithfully to his official duties all day long and was equally faithful to his private devotions while other men slept; or Sulaim ibn Itr, one of the first to hold the office of kādī (judge) in Egypt, who set apart three periods of each night for reciting the Koran. Of Sulaim it is also narrated that after undergoing a certain sea voyage in rough weather he stayed in a cave seven days thanking God for deliverance (the Arabs were not sea-faring men). Whatever our opinion of the trustworthiness of these anecdotes, they unquestionably show us the ideal of Muslim sainthood in the earliest period, before the Sūfī fraternity had made its appearance.

Even the public worship, for all its unedifying stiffness, could provide some food for the mystic. There is a powerful appeal in the human voice, for those who are ready to be moved, and Islam has been fortunate in the manner and extent of its use of this instrument. It was probably accident, or stress of circumstances, rather than instinct, that led Mohammed, in arranging for the call to prayer, to eschew the bells, resounding suspended rods, and other gong-like devices of the Christians, and employ instead a huge negro with a throat of brass. Bilāl had been tortured for the faith before the flight from Mekka, and when the tremendous but melodious voice was heard in Medina calling to prayer, the listeners were stirred not only by the mere sound and by the solemn words of the call, but also by a personal reminder of what the faith meant. A peculiar spiritual asset of Islam, all through its long history, in many lands and peoples, has been the thrill produced by the chant of the muezzin, especially in the early morning. It has set many a soul to pondering the deeper meaning of the cry: "Prayer is better than sleep!"

## II

At some time in the latter part of the second century after Mohammed arose the Sūfis, mystics throughout their history. As we first hear of them they are simply Muslim ascetics living a life very much like that of the monks and mendicant friars of the Christian faith. They were called Sūfis because of the robe of coarse wool (*sūf*) which they wore. Just when and where the name was first given, and how the consciousness of a distinct brotherhood came into being, is uncertain. Eventually the designation included numerous differing tendencies, and the fraternity in its various branches spread over the whole Mohammedan world, from the East Indian archipelago to the Atlantic Ocean. To do it even scant justice would require a volume.

The movement which produced the Sūfis of the earliest type arose naturally within the Muslim ranks as a further development of the religious tendency described in the preceding pages. Two factors, especially, combined to bring this about. One was the reaction of piety against increasing worldliness, and the other was the influence of the Christian religion. Christianity from the first left its distinct traces on Sufism, and even more in its somewhat later stages than at the very beginning. The manner of life of those Christians who had a wide reputation for holiness and for the special powers and prerogatives of sainthood made its impression on the more devout minded of the Mohammedans. More potent, however, was the impulse from within Islam. The contrast between this best of all religions and the daily life of those who professed it was a startling one for thinking men. They knew something of the fruit which other religions could produce, for Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians were within easy reach. The Koran warns, a hundred times over, that every man will be called to account for what he has done or left undone. It

declares, moreover, with emphasis that at the judgment day and in the life to come the status of those who deny themselves and give their lives to the service of Allah will be very different from that of the careless multitude. 45:20: "Do those who commit evil deeds supose that we will make them equal in their life and their death to those who believe and work righteous deeds?" 46:12: "Verily, those who say, 'Our Lord is God,' and then live uprightly, there is no fear for them." 3:136: "Do ye think that ye can enter Paradise and God not know which of you have striven, and have remained steadfast?" 3:146: "Among you are those who love this world, and among you are those who love the world to come." 3:139: "He who desires the reward of this world shall receive it from us, and he who desires the reward of the world to come shall likewise receive it." Even the professed Muslim had need to fear the "day of reckoning." The reported last words of Amr ibn al-Āsī, the conqueror of Egypt, afford a good illustration. His son Abdallah, standing at his bedside and seeing his evident distress, asked: "Is this fear of death, my father?" "Not so," replied the old warrior, "but of what is to come after death." Abdallah tried to reassure him by reminding him of his companionship with the Prophet and of the many battles he had fought for the faith. But Amr would not be comforted. "Islam has had three stages for me," he said. "At first, I fought against the Prophet and did him all the harm I could. If I had died then, there could have been no doubt. 'Hell-fire for Amr,' men would have said. Then came the day when Mohammed took my hand, and I swore allegiance to him. If I had died then, men would have said: 'Amr has turned Muslim; we believe that Allah has good in store for him.' I thought that Islam would keep me from sinning. But soon came military command, and high office, and great temptations. I have fear for this last stage."

When foreign lands were conquered, and the Mohammedan state became a great world power, the simple, upright life of Abu Bekr and Omar, the first successors of Mohammed, was soon left far behind. The caliphate became a scandal, the lesser officials were too often tyrants and profligates, and the common people, as usual, followed the example of their rulers to the best of their ability. The devout minority felt that the faith once delivered to the saints was going to the dogs. Wherever they turned they saw greed, the pursuit of luxury, loose morals, and neglect of religious duties. The Koran, the Word of God, though nominally reverenced was really made a mockery. They had thought of Islam as a unit, but were now horrified to see it breaking up into rival camps warring fiercely with one another. No wonder that spontaneously in various Mohammedan lands there arose companies or fraternities pledged to an ascetic life, in strong reaction against the prevailing worldliness. "Back to Allah!" was their watchword, and they found the true meaning of *islām* in such maxims as these: This life is of no account in comparison with the life to come; Take no thought what you shall eat or drink; Cast yourself wholly upon God, if you will serve him. Just as these ideas appealed to the first Christian ascetics, or to the followers of Peter Waldus or Ignatius Loyola, so they appealed to many Mohammedans. From such beginnings arose the Sūfi community, which eventually built its monasteries and formulated its monastic rules, after the manner of its Christian predecessors.

It is true that Mohammed had looked with little favor on the monkish scheme of things, and did not wish to see his followers live celibate or conspicuously ascetic lives. But the Koran abounds in exhortations to despise the present world with its pride and luxury, and the Sūfi had the best of authority for his tenets. The strict devotees not only shunned the temptations of wealth and comfort, but also

gave up their trades and professions. How could a man really trust in God who relied on his day's wages? More and more they gave themselves over to religious contemplation. The Koran, as we have seen, gives little attention to cultivating a state of mind, but this they made their chief concern. In the matter of religious exercises also the Sūfis had a real contribution to make. The worship as they found it was primarily a prescribed duty rather than the satisfaction of a need. Of its spontaneous side, as a means of coming personally near to God, Mohammed had had very little to say; though, as we have seen, something of the sort was present in Islam from the first. Here, then, the mystics had their opportunity. They made it their business to devise exercises designed to kindle a true religious fervor, putting into them all the oriental warmth which the matter-of-fact Mekkan had left out; working themselves up to the desired pitch by various means, such as long continued and intense contemplation, the reiteration of certain chanted formulæ, and especially dwelling on the ideas of self-renunciation and complete devotion. Where the Koran and the customary Muslim formulæ mention the fear of God, the Sūfi speaks of the love of God, and his usual designation of the divine being is "The Beloved." In the early period, music as a means of inducing religious emotion was looked upon with a disfavor amounting to horror, for the line between religious ecstasy and an unholy excitement of the senses was seen to be often a vanishing one, and the latter result was more to be depended on than the former. So for a time the performer on the lute and the singer of songs were branded as impious by the stricter Mohammedans, and we frequently hear of a convert "repenting of music" as he might repent of perjury or highway robbery. At a later day this rigidity was relaxed, however, and the Sūfis made regular use of music in their exercises. As for the language needed to express the mystic's passionate devotion, it could

only be taken from the language of worldly passion, whence it comes about that some of the characteristic Sūfi literature has a decidedly erotic sound.

As far as Muslim doctrine is concerned, the Sūfis at first exercised no considerable influence, except negatively. Their chief aims and interests were not intellectual, but emotional. Religion was for them an experience, and systems of belief were of minor consequence. The goal which they set before them was complete devotion to God and ultimately complete union with him. This they sought to reach through a more or less definitely prescribed mode of life termed " the way," in which repentance, abstinence, self-renunciation, constancy in religious exercises, and patient trust in " The Beloved " were the principal stages. Seclusion, abject poverty, and long fasting were practiced by the most zealous. As might be expected, the rigidly consistent devotees pronounced flatly against calling in physicians, or employing medicine, in case of illness. " The power of God," they said, " is the only thing that can heal. What the patient needs to do is to bring his soul into the true harmony; then he will find that he is healed." One of the leaders of the new school is quoted as giving the following advice to a sick man of his acquaintance: " Put under your pillow my book " (a prototype of " Science and Health "), " and trust in God." Of course the extreme views regarding poverty and illness were opposed by the adherents of the traditional orthodoxy, for the simple reason that Mohammed and Ali and the primitive saints and heroes were men whose life and habits were well known. They had held property, labored like other men, and taken medicine when they were ill. The Tradition was quite clear on these points. But the Sūfi teaching, enforced by the holy life of its exponents, made a strong impression, and the controversy was quite lively in the tenth century of our era.

A chief source of recruits to the mystics was reaction

against the prevailing tendencies in Islam. As at first the groups of ascetics had arisen in protest against the widespread impiety, so a little later, and thenceforward, the followers of "the way" received large and constant reenforcement because of the spread of rationalism and skepticism among the more learned Muslims and their pupils. To unbelief the Sūfis opposed intuitive knowledge assured by experience, and to those who would demonstrate that the traditional dogmas of Islam were outgrown they showed a faith and zeal that were positively burning. As has been the case in other religions, this type of faith gained more and more the sympathy and participation of the multitude. The reaction against an exaggerated scholasticism also played its important part. The Mohammedan doctors were as great adepts at hair-splitting as their Christian contemporaries, and the systems of doctrine evolved by the numerous rival schools, while worthy of admiration as intellectual achievements, left the mystics cold and the common people far behind. There were long and bitter controversies over definitions and various shibboleths, while prosecutions for heresy were frequent. The Allah of the orthodox theologians was a deity who might satisfy a philosophical system, but could satisfy nothing else. Between him and human beings there could be no communion of any sort. The philosophy and natural science of the Greeks, becoming accessible through Arabic translations made from Syriac versions of Greek treatises, exerted a profound influence and added to the complication. The task of harmonizing Plotinus and his fellows with the Koran was one that might well have given pause to Gabriel himself, but the Muslim scholars undertook it with joy and no misgivings. Those earnest Mohammedans who wished not only to be orthodox but also to have a religion that meant something to them felt that they were getting more stones than bread. One of them, after reading a certain neo-theological pamphlet, ex-

pressed himself as follows; and his words, which have a very modern sound, doubtless voiced the feelings of a great many: "These men fill their writings with religious phrases, and with incidental bits of the divine book. They also put in any number of words which may mean two or more different things. As for the material contents, they are made up from every known science, but they do not satisfy the reader's hunger, nor show him the way to what he needs to know." As the reaction against a similar over-developed scholasticism in the Christian church brought forward Eckhart, Tauler, and their fellow mystics, so in mediæval Islam one effect of the exaggerated emphasis on doctrinal formulæ was greatly to swell the ranks of the Sūfis. Also, as in the history of Christianity the ascetics and mystics and their adherents generally occupied a dominating place, so in the history of Mohammedanism the Sūfis — using the term in the broad sense — soon came to be a most influential body. As has already been said, Sufism is not a system of philosophy, nor has it a creed. It is a way of life, and a practical theology; rooting originally in Islam, but so independent of either tradition or reason that it could not be held within the strict limits of any one faith. As a rule, Sūfis have preferred to regard themselves as orthodox Mohammedans, and a large proportion of them could make this claim with some good reason. They have their own characteristic exegesis of the Koran, interpreting it allegorically in much the same way as the Bible has been interpreted from time to time by Jewish and Christian scholars. Sūfis of every type observe the formal requirements of the Muslim faith, though generally without acknowledging to them any especial value. Here, again, they have their own allegorical interpretation, and regard the state of mind of the participant and his appreciation of the spiritual meaning of the ceremonies as the only thing of importance. The nearer the follower of "the way" approaches to his divine goal, the less it matters what

religion he formally professes. To the saint, no one religion can contribute more than any other, he is superior to them all; to the novice, each and every religion can be useful. So some of the most enlightened of their spokesmen have said. Between Sūfis and Christians of the ascetic and quietistic type there was always strong affinity. The Sūfi literature contains many apocryphal sayings of Jesus, as well as correct citations from the Gospels, and many anecdotes concerning Jesus or John the Baptist (especially revered because of his ascetic mode of life). What is more important, the modes of thought developed through centuries of Christian mysticism were taken over liberally by these like-minded Mohammedans. It was also through Christian hands that they received the Neo-Platonic philosophy which was appropriated and adapted by certain schools. Greek mystical ideas had been familiar in the East for a long time, and their value was recognized by Sūfis of the more speculative, philosophical type which soon arose. In like manner other forms of oriental philosophy and theosophy were laid under contribution. The fundamental ideas of all these various types of the later Sufism are practically the same, and mark a considerable advance over the simply ascetic and devotional type with which the whole great movement in Islam began.

The essentials of Sūfi doctrine in its most characteristically developed form may be summed up as follows. God is the one absolute reality. He is everywhere present, pervades all things. The universe is the external, visible expression of him. His best and highest manifestation is in man, whose higher nature is a direct emanation from the divine. The human mind is a bit of the universal Reason. In like manner human love is a divine gift, the smaller fire kindled from the greater. Man's knowledge of God is an illumination from above. He sees and knows Him with increasing distinctness and certainty as he perseveres in the faith; not through any mental development of his own or by means of

any variety of human wisdom, but because his mind becoming increasingly purified can receive more and more of the light which God wills to give to his elect in varying measure. This purification also is the work of God, but man has his important part in it. He must repent of his sins, cast them off, and resolutely turn his back on them, trusting in God to keep him firm. He must mortify his evil self, with its pride and its passions, in every possible way, surrender his will to God, and avoid evil thoughts by keeping his mind constantly fixed on divine things. Every impurity is a barrier to the light, and to be thus "veiled" from God is the severest of afflictions.

Side by side with the divine illumination stands the love of God. Some Sūfi writers have claimed that Islam, more than other religions, is the religion of love — a claim which it is quitè safe to say would never be suggested to any one by the Koran, nor by the orthodox Mohammedan teaching. Love, like knowledge, is bestowed by divine grace. God's love precedes; those whom he has chosen find it kindled in their hearts, burning more and more brightly as the way is cleared for it by contemplation, prayer, and intense desire. Every object of attachment and wish other than God must be removed from the heart. The Sūfis of the earlier type loved God as a transcendent personality (the true Mohammedan doctrine), and in following this idea to its ultimate consequences found it easy to put aside all human affections. But those of the later type, conceiving God as an immanent spirit, practiced a sympathy and affection extending not only to human beings but also to all other living creatures. The story of the saint who traveled several hundred miles in order to carry back a few ants to their home from which he had unwittingly transported them is an extreme instance. One of the early Persian teachers of this school, quoted in Nicholson's *Mystics of Islam,* p. 111, says that "when God loves a man he en-

dows him with three qualities in token thereof: a bounty like that of the sea, a sympathy like that of the sun, and a humility like that of the earth."

It is when in the condition of an ecstatic trance that the human soul can have unhindered communion with the divine. The more completely the devotee can lose himself, the more completely he can see and know his Beloved and feel at one with him. The state of ecstasy is accordingly characteristic of those who are far advanced in "the way." It comes upon a man when God wills, nevertheless the man can in various ways help to bring about the experience. When he has prepared himself, by removing every obstacle and raising his own susceptibility to its highest degree, he can only wait to see whether it is the divine purpose to inspire and possess him, or not. Intense concentration of the mind, and absorption in prayer, were the all-important aids to reaching the ecstatic condition. Many also sought the help of music, singing, and dancing. The novice would often find it necessary to beat or otherwise torture himself in order to keep his attention from wavering. The saint has no longer need of such discipline, but has reached the point where *zikr* (dwelling upon the thought of God) and contemplation are second nature. The divine attributes are revealed in their true meaning to the chosen worshipper, and it is upon these that his contemplation is concentrated. All other thoughts and feelings, all objects of knowledge, desire, or will, are banished, until only the consciousness of God remains in the mind. The state of ecstasy means to him who attains it not only divine illumination but also divine love. In it the worshipper himself is effaced, the seeker becoming completely merged in the Sought; a foretaste of the condition which is to be unending.

This esoteric doctrine has picturesque illustration in the allegory so often quoted from the celebrated Persian mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, describing the experience of human love

seeking admission into the sanctuary of the Divine. "One knocked at the door of the Beloved, and a voice from within inquired, 'Who is there?' He answered, '*It is I.*' But the voice said, 'This house will not hold me and thee.' So the door remained shut. Then the lover withdrew into the wilderness, and fasted and prayed in solitude. After a year he returned, and knocked again at the door. Again the voice demanded, 'Who is there?' And the lover replied, '*It is Thou!*' Then the door was opened."

The whole long process through which the Sūfi mystic seeks to attain his end may be summed up in one phrase, the extinction of self. The meaning of this to the individual differs according to the stage which he has reached. At first, it is the elimination of all passions and desires; later, it consists in clearing the mind of everything that is not God; ultimately, it is the passing away of consciousness itself. Not until this final stage of the process has been accomplished can the devotee reach his goal, absorption in the divine All.

This last feature of the Sūfi scheme sounds distinctly Aryan, and such indeed it is in its origin. The Arabic term *fanā,* "passing away," which plays such an important part in the scheme, very closely corresponds, in its use to mean the extinction of the individual self, to the Buddhistic *nirvāna.* As Nicholson especially has made clear, however, the agreement with Buddhism is only partial, inasmuch as *nirvāna* is merely negative, while the *fanā* of the Sūfis, meaning the "passing away" of the phenomenal existence, involves *bagā,* "continuance," of the real existence. On the other hand, the Sūfi conception of absorption of the individual self in Universal Being seems to have been derived from Indian pantheism. It is indeed evident that the most characteristic development of Sufism was strongly influenced by Indo-Persian religious ideas. It was in Persian thought especially that it was elaborated, and even more than elsewhere it flourished on Persian soil. But the claim, often

made, that the Aryan mind produced Sufism, is far from the truth, as the preceding sketch of the rise and growth of Mohammedan mysticism may suffice to show. One of the most fervid and eloquent of all the mystic poets of Islam, Omar ibn al-Fārid, born in Cairo in the year 1181, was of pure Arab stock. Springing up in Islam, and striking its roots deep in the soil of many lands before any strong influence from Persia was felt, Sufism was as hospitable at the outset to Christian and Greek mystical and philosophical ideas as it was later to certain features of Buddhism and the Vedānta. The drift into pantheism or monism was inevitable in any case.

The distinctive doctrines of Islam were of course brushed aside, or re-interpreted, to a greater or less extent. The Sūfi conception of the "unity" of Allah is far removed from that of the Mohammedan theologians. As for the Prophet and the Sacred Book, the thoroughgoing mystic can ultimately dispense with them, since he is vouchsafed a revelation of his own which will suffice for him. To the more extreme Sūfis the teaching of the Koran amounts to polytheism. The contrast between evil and good, right and wrong, means less and less to the true devotee, as he advances toward perfection. The idea of the rewards and punishments of the future life contains nothing for him. "I do not say," says a famous Sūfi teacher, "that Paradise and Hell are non-existent, but I say that they are nothing to me, because God created them both, and there is no room for any created object in the place where I am" (Nicholson, *Mystics,* p. 87).

Nevertheless, this is all properly called "Mohammedan" mysticism. Sūfi authorities of every school recognize Islam as their home, however far they may seem to us to have strayed from it. More than this, the endeavor on both sides to make the most of the common ground between the Sūfi and the traditionally orthodox Muslim has been constant

and fruitful. One of the greatest of all Mohammedan theologians, Ghazāli, was a Sūfi as well as a philosopher, and he made it his aim to put new life into Mohammedan doctrine, especially by dealing more adequately than others had dealt with the religion of experience. Ever since his day the mystical interpretation of Islam has held its prominent place in the orthodox faith.

## III

The "saint" was as important a figure in Islam, after the first century or two, as in the contemporary Christian community. On the basis of the Koran, the saint might be defined as one who prays diligently, supports the cause of Allah with his property and his life, does his duty to his family, helps the poor, and pays his bills promptly. These characteristics were very soon reënforced, and then supplanted, by those of religious devotion and the ascetic mode of life. It is hardly necessary to say that the conception of sainthood which was developed among the Sūfis became at length the dominating one. Not all followers of the "way" were on the same footing. Some had been elected, by divine grace, as the recipients of special favor. The fact of the election was ordinarily made known to the community by the mode of life and the marvelous powers of the person thus distinguished; in some cases, however, it remained hidden even from himself. Those recognized as saints were commonly described as "possessed" by God, or as "near to" God (whence the designation *walī,* often written *wely*). It was their peculiar privilege to have from time to time the revelation of things hidden from ordinary human beings, the veil being lifted for them while they continued in the condition of a trance. This conception of the saint was common to all the Mohammedan or quasi-Mohammedan sects.

As time went on, both the popular idea and the recognized

formal doctrine of the powers of the *walī* became more extravagant. They were believed to have the gift of second sight not only when in the trance condition, but at all times. The miracles which they were permitted to perform included every imaginable wonder, and the voluminous legends of the Muslim saints swarm with accounts of mind-reading, telepathy, hypnotism, faith-healing, levitation, and the like, as well as far more marvelous things. Many of these accounts are not without value to the modern investigator, as they can be controlled to some extent by more recent parallels. From the descriptions of trances and visions little can be learned with certainty, at least at present, and it would be fruitless to spend time on them here, highly interesting though they sometimes are.

To what extent the saint was subject to the moral law, was always a matter of some controversy. It is easy to believe that the favorite of God, gifted with divine insight, can do no wrong; and history shows that every doctrine of the divinely chosen and inspired few has had its by-product of antinomianism. Thus it was with the Christian "Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit," in the thirteenth century A. D., and so it has been with many others since. The record of Muslim sainthood furnishes no exception in this regard. *Walīs, imāms,* and their like were generally believed to be preserved from error, and not subject to criticism when they did what would be unlawful for the ordinary mortal. But might not the fact of a flagrant offence against the standards of morality or decency show that the transgressor was *not* a saint, after all? There are on record cases where the decision of some revered authority, or of the Muslim community, declared the sinning superman unworthy of his halo. An example interesting because of its historical importance is the story of the difference of opinion which split the Shī'a sect in two, in the ninth century A. D. In this sect the spiritual headship was vested in an *imām,*

who embodied for his generation the divine Light which was handed on by a sort of heaven-directed ordination, each *imām* nominating his successor. The sixth *imām* in the series named, in due time, his son Ismā'īl to succeed him. All went well until, one day, the holy appointee was found in a state of exaltation which obviously had not been produced by religious exercises. And this in Islam, with its strict prohibition! His father was very angry, and at once transferred the nomination from Ismā'īl to his brother Mūsā. But this action raised a great commotion in the party, as might have been expected. There were many who refused to accept the substitution of Mūsā for his elder brother. "God," they insisted, "does not change his mind; the first nomination was the only valid one." They defended Ismā'īl against the charge of impiety. "It is true," they said, "that the Koran forbids wine. But every such regulation has both an external, obvious meaning and a deeper, hidden, spiritual meaning. The fact that the chosen imām acted as he did merely shows his greater spirituality. He has passed beyond the coarse husk and has found the kernel inside." So the sect divided; and from that time on the "Ismailians" or "seveners" were separated from the main body of "twelvers" (whose line of *imāms,* continued through Mūsā, ultimately reached the number twelve). It is only fair to say that the number of those saints who manifested their greater spirituality in this easy way seems to have been comparatively small.

It is an interesting fact that among the celebrated mystics of Islam are certain holy women, who have stood in the very foremost rank of saints. As in the case of the sainted women of other great religions, this was due not only to the exalted character and the actual words and deeds of the few thus supremely honored, but also in some measure to the position of woman in the popular imagination. It is natural that in this emotional, passionate type of religion should have been

seen possibilities of adoration which the woman's nature might realize more fully than the man's. Moreover, chivalry is native to the Arabs, and the greatest of these heroines of the Muslim faith were of Arab stock and lived in an Arab environment. At the very beginning of the Sūfi movement in Islam stands a woman saint to whom the Muslim doctors of the next generation and thereafter all point, saying in effect: "If you would see the true Sūfi religion, the best product of Mohammedanism, look at *her*!" This was Rābia, poetess of unusual gifts as well as theologian, who flourished in the first half of the eighth century A. D., and whose tomb at Jerusalem is still eagerly visited by pilgrims. The claim of the Sūfis, that she was one of their number, presumably had its foundation only in their wish; but she was a forerunner of the best Sufism, and seems to have shown, more clearly than any other of her time, the way which so many were trying to find. Much that is said of her reminds the reader of St. Catharine of Siena. "Do you *see* God when you adore him?" some one asked. "Certainly," she replied, "if I did not see him I could not adore him." To a friend who wished for her a husband she said: "I have long been married; for years past my existence has been absorbed in Him." She narrates of herself: "I saw the Prophet in a dream. He said to me, 'Rābia, dost thou love me?' I answered, 'O Apostle of God, who does not love thee? — but love of God has so absorbed me that neither love nor hate of aught else remains in my heart.'" Among other oft-quoted sayings are the following. "O God! whatever share of this world thou hast allotted to me, bestow it on thine enemies; and whatever share of the next world thou hast allotted to me, bestow it on thy friends. Thou art enough for me." "O God! if I worship thee in fear of hell, burn me in hell; and if I worship thee in hope of heaven, exclude me from heaven; but if I worship thee for thine own sake, withhold not thine everlasting beauty!"

A successor of Rābia, hardly less noted, was Nafīsa, to whose shrine at Cairo the pious Muslims flock. Hers was an equally warm and pure type of religion; and she was also celebrated for her learning, in which she was said to stand on equal footing with the foremost sages of the day. Her wealth, which was considerable, she devoted to good works of every sort, while the poor and the distressed thronged to her for help.

Of course Mohammedan mysticism had its martyrs. The Sūfis and their kind generally avoided religious controversy, as I have said; but some of their characteristic doctrines passed over imperceptibly into rank heresies which could not easily be tolerated when once they were formulated in an obnoxious way and dwelt upon. Pantheism, theories of incarnation, the "passing away" of the individual (which in the teaching of not a few meant pure annihilation); these were among the chief points of danger. The extravagant claims and arrogant attitude of some of these "perfected ones" would be likely to increase any already existing irritation, it may be added. It is probably fruitless to pursue the inquiry, which some have instituted, whether there was not a saner attitude of tolerance toward pantheistic mysticism in medieval Islam than in medieval Christianity. Certainly the champions of strict orthodoxy in both communities took their responsibility seriously; and certainly when the extreme penalty of heresy was exacted, by either Christians or Muslims, it was generally the case that other motives — personal, public, and especially political — were combined with the religious motive.

A typical and noted instance is that of the pantheistic philosopher Suhrawardi, who was strangled and impaled before the great castle in Aleppo in January, 1192, in the thirty-eighth year of his age. In spite of his comparative youth, he was one of the most learned men of his time. His attainments in natural science, in particular, had helped to

give him the popular reputation of practicing the black art. During his lifetime he was revered as a saint, and had a numerous following. After his death he was thought of by the common people as a worker of miracles, and even at the present day there is a superstitious veneration of the spot where he met his end. The execution was by order of Saladin's son, acting under the advice of his usually tolerant father. The few sayings and verses which have been handed down from Suhrawardi contain nothing different from what we read in the writings of many noted Sūfi teachers. Here is one of his maxims: "Set your thought on such an image of holiness as can satisfy him who is seeking delight." The following is from a poem of his, addressed to "the Beloved":

Our souls are ever turned toward Thee with warm affection;
The hearts of Thy lovers yearn for Thee, and thirst for the bliss of meeting. . . .
Instead of the darkness of Thy displeasure grant us the light of Thy favor;
Separation from Thee is night, reunion the light of morning.

The following verses describe the ultimate extinction (*fanā*) of the devotee who has reached his goal:

They appeared in His presence, every token of their personal existence was gone.
When they saw Him, they stood revealed, and cried aloud.
He gave them annihilation; the veils of existence fell off, and their souls were dissolved.

The great Muslim biographer Ibn Khallikān says that Suhrawardi invited trouble by his unwise utterances. This may well be true; on the other hand, the biographer may be somewhat influenced by his loyalty to the Muslim authorities.

A more celebrated case is that of the Sūfi martyr Hallāj, who lived at the beginning of the fourth Mohammedan century. He was a Persian, the grandson of a Zoroastrian; a

man of singularly blameless life, but an apostle of pantheism of a dangerous type. He taught the essential divinity of man, and a doctrine of incarnation sufficiently like the Christian doctrine to be branded as one of the worst heresies. "Cultivate the spiritual life, let the divine power drive out from you the evil human nature, until the way is prepared for your true self. Then you may be filled with the Divine Spirit and become a new personality, a God-man. Who thereafter sees you, sees God; whatever acts you perform are divine acts." He was revered by his disciples as a saint, and more than a saint. They believed that he not only wrought miracles but had raised a dead man to life. On the other hand, the pillars of the Muslim faith opposed him as a dangerous man and a blasphemer. Most intolerable of all was the famous saying quoted against him, but by many praised as a noble utterance, "I am the Truth," that is, the Ultimate Verity, the phrase therefore meaning exactly, "I am God."

Hallāj was arrested, and put on trial at Bagdad. Against him were arrayed his written and spoken words, but, as usual, unequivocal evidence was hard to find. Asked directly what he said of himself, he replied: "I am neither divinity, nor prophet; I am a man, who adores the One God." He would not, however, retract his saying, "*Aʿna 'l-Haqq,*" I am the Truth. The few disciples who stood by him asserted stoutly that he was divine, and that he had raised the dead. The judge, like a second Pontius Pilate, refused at first to convict; but under pressure from the grand vizīr, backed by some of the foremost Muslim doctors, he at last yielded, and the death sentence was pronounced. Hallāj protested, to the last: "I am a Muslim. I believe the Tradition; I have always recognized the authority of the imāms, and that of the first four caliphs. You have no right to shed my blood!" The sentence passed upon him was this: he was to be beaten with a thousand

stripes. If he then still lived, a hand was to be cut off, then a foot; then the other hand, then the other foot. Finally he was to be beheaded, and his body burned to ashes. The sentence was executed, and Hallāj met his death with fortitude. His ashes were thrown into the Tigris river. Nevertheless his disciples refused to believe that he was dead. First one, and then another, professed to have seen him alive some days after. There were several who told how they had met him on the road leading to Nahrawān, and had heard him speak. This was in 922 A. D.

A most important factor in the development of the later Mohammedan mysticism, down to the present day, has been the influence of The Dervish Orders. The "dervish" is the Mohammedan counterpart of the begging friar of medieval Europe. He stands on a somewhat lower plane than the typical Sūfi, since he does not, like the latter, give himself over absolutely to contemplation in the endeavor to eliminate the last vestige of self. The organization of these Sūfi "schools of the prophets" proceeded naturally, from small beginnings, the nucleus in each case being some renowned teacher and the small circle of his pupils. In order to make the fellowship more significant and more permanent, and to give it a definite stamp, as the circle increased, rules of conduct and procedure were adopted; both the general rules of an ascetic and religious life, and also whatever special distinguishing regulations or practices their spiritual head, or their own custom, had prescribed. After the death of the teacher, he was revered as the founder and patron saint of the fraternity, and his spirit was held to be still present to impart instruction. The first of these fraternities were founded in the twelfth century A. D.

Hughes, *Notes on Muhammadanism,* gives the following as the usual method of admission to a certain order of dervishes. After the prescribed ablutions, the disciple seats himself before his spiritual guide (*murshid*). The Murshid

takes the disciple's right hand, and causes him to repeat several times the following confession: "I ask forgiveness of the great God, than whom there is no other deity, the Eternal, the Everlasting, the Living One. I turn to Him in repentance, and beg His grace and forgiveness." Then the disciple repeats after the Murshid: "I beg for the favor of God and of the Prophet; and I take for my guide to God (here the Murshid is named), not to change or to separate. God is our witness. By the great God; there is no deity but God! Amen." The two then recite the prayer which forms the first chapter of the Koran, and the disciple concludes the ceremony by kissing the Murshid's hand. Afterward there is a regular system of instruction, with daily exercises. The disciple must visit his spiritual guide frequently.

The Mohammedan saint, as already noted, is one who is *possessed* by the Divine Spirit. The dervish fraternities, which are training-schools of saints, aim to foster this "possession." The ecstatic trance-like condition, in which the worshipper loses himself completely and is carried away by the divine power which seizes him, is the thing especially sought, without much preference as to the means of arriving at the experience. Hence the general exaggeration, and cheapening, of the typical Sūfi practices and methods; and those extravagant and grotesque performances with which the western world is more or less familiar. As the contemporary of Paul "spoke with tongues," or as the negro in his camp-meeting "gets religion" with the help of shouting and singing and rhythmic motions more or less violent, so the dervish in Constantinople or Cairo, after getting as near to the divine as he can by means of more self-contained exercises, passes on into devotional esctasy through the excitement induced by the beating of drums and thrumming of lutes, by wild chanting and wailing ("howling"), or by whirling about in one direction until the human and the

divine are completely merged in a sort of religious vertigo. There is also characteristic exaggeration in such matters as the worship of saints and the importance assigned to the working of miracles. In doctrine as in customs these fraternities have been free to go their own way, always maintaining their loyalty to Islam. It is not surprising that a few of the orders, the so-called "lawless dervishes," have gained an undesirable reputation for laxity in morals, defended by them on the ground of superiority to the regulations binding on the ordinary sinner.

The great service performed by the Dervish Orders, however, lies in this, that they have been the means of infusing the devotional, mystical element into the whole fabric of Mohammedan religious practice. The Sūfi saints and doctors, with their lofty philosophy and esoteric wisdom, were better able to awe the public than to show it how to worship. Such knowledge was too wonderful for the common people, they could not attain unto it. But what these unapproachable ones could not do was done by the humbler groups. In addition to regular members the most of these fraternities have lay members; and this form of association has been so generally welcomed that at the present day the typical Muslim, in every Mohammedan land, is connected with one or another of the orders.

Simple forms of the dervish *dhikr* (generally pronounced *zikr*) constitute the ordinary devotional service — supplementing the prescribed formal worship — in the Mohammedan community. The typical dervish exercise of this nature has often been described in detail, and the description need not be repeated here. Among the usual features are the reciting of sentences from the Koran, and of formulas whose meaning is that *God is present;* the use of instruments of music or percussion; and a regular system of postures and ejaculations. Sometimes a rosary of ninety-nine beads, corresponding to the ninety-nine Names of God, is employed. The

writer has been much impressed with the manifestly devotional spirit in such a Muslim "prayer-meeting." In observing how men and youths, average citizens of the small town, known as workmen and tradesmen of no apparent religious turn or especially emotional nature, joined with interest and fervor in the exercises of the evening; rising excitement showing in their eyes as the drum sounded, solemn formulæ were chanted, and the members of the little congregation rocked their bodies to and fro; the guest from the western world felt that all this had much in common with what he had seen in his own land. Such gatherings and exercises represent an earnest and sober attempt to realize the true meaning of *zikr* (dwelling on the thought of God), in fulfilment of a conscious need. "God is here" is the leading idea in all these voluntary religious meetings of devout Muslims, whatever the form of their exercises, and however variously the idea of the divine presence may be conceived. By one the phrase may be interpreted in the direction of pantheism, reminding of the Koran passage (2: 109), "Whichever way ye turn, there is God's face." To another the words and the experience may rather call to mind the assurance of Allah's personal presence (58: 8), "There is no conference of three in which He is not the fourth, nor of five in which He is not the sixth. Be the number less or more, He is with them." Doubtless each one of the participants would testify that the *zikr* meant more to him than any other single expression of his Islam. Certain it is that this widespread Mohammedan religious exercise has in it the seed of new life. Such collective mysticism has often brought about extensive religious reform where dogma and tradition have lost their primitive hold, and the history of other movements may be repeated here. It is a factor that can never be left out of account by those who are looking with some hope for a day when the old Islam, which the world has known too long, may grow into something better.

# THE MYSTICISM OF DANTE

CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE

In this paper I shall not attempt to set forth the many instances in Dante's various writings where he uses the imagery and language of mysticism, but shall seek to determine from his works whether his own recorded experiences entitle him to be ranked in this strange and noble company of the otherworldly, and, if so, to ascertain the type and degree of his mysticism.

No biographical data which have come down to us from any contemporary afford us the slightest help here. Neither the classic paragraphs of Villani nor Boccaccio's garrulous biography hints at any extraordinary mystical exaltation of the great Florentine, or suggests that any weird light of holiness rests upon him. Tradition also, which has saved a few meager and rather pointless anecdotes, is silent as a sphinx. Whatever mystical emotions the poet had were in no respect spectacular enough to attract the attention of others. Most reticent of men, he has, however, with the rare ability of an exalted genius, laid bare the life of his spirit from its first awakening until he gazed into the Fountain of Living Light Eternal. Our task is to search the records for indications of Dante's genuine experiences. This is not as simple a matter as at first it may appear, for in the *Vita Nuova* he is an artist portraying the ideal of love, and in the *Divina Commedia* he is a protagonist often representing universal humanity. Yet Dante's individuality is so positive and clearly defined that we need not despair of dissociating his

own personal thoughts and actions from the creations of his art and the demands of his message.

The first question is the evidential value of the *Vita Nuova* with its stately opening *Incipit Vita Nuova.* To what extent may the dream-like experiences of the poet be considered autobiographical? Dante's nature was so essentially truthful that our investigation would be easy if we were persuaded that he was attempting to set down his actual thoughts and emotions, but as we have just stated, he was a troubadour of love: an idealist describing his passion in the interests of his art: he is evidently more eager to conform his words to a poetic ideal than to dispassionately narrate facts as they occurred.

We must furthermore remember that the poems comprising the *Vita Nuova* were selected from the sheaf of verses which he had written from time to time during the enchanted days of his youth, while the prose comments which bind them together were composed between his twenty-fifth and thirtieth years when he was quite a different being from the one who wrote the sonnets and odes which they explain. "An erudite Dante," says Grandgent, "is this commentator, serious, careful of his reputation, steeped in mysticism, full of Biblical images and of philosophical doctrine. What he desires above all is to justify his life before others and before his own conscience, to read into his juvenile verses a depth and unity which they were far from possessing, to bring all the emotions of youth into harmony with the supernatural influence ultimately ascribed to Beatrice, to transform this gentle Florentine into an angel, to discover in all his relations with her the sign of heavenly predestination." [1] With this statement I cordially agree, but the incredible pains the poet took to bring into unity his conflicting verses indicate that they grew out of genuine experiences whose mystical meaning his more mature reason was attempting to interpret.

[1] *Studies of Dante's Lyrics,* p. 129.

With confidence, therefore, we trace and ascribe to Dante before he reached his thirtieth year four distinct spiritual experiences. The first occurred when he was eighteen and he thus describes it: "This admirable lady appeared to me, clothed in purest white, between two gentle ladies who were of greater age; and, passing along a street, turned her eyes toward that place where I stood very timidly; and by her ineffable courtesy, which is to-day rewarded in the eternal world, saluted me with such virtue that it seemed to me that I saw all the bounds of bliss." [2] Intoxicated by the sweetness of her words he betook himself to his chamber, "and thinking of her, a sweet slumber overcame me, in which a marvelous vision appeared to me." It was a vision of love as a lord of fearful aspect bearing in his arms the lady of the salutation sleeping, and in his hand the poet's heart all aflame. Love aroused the lady and compelled her to eat the burning heart.

This chance meeting with Beatrice and her most sweet salutation awoke the poetic soul of Dante and kindled his genius to produce the first sonnet he cared to preserve.

His succeeding verses were conventional, and scarcely superior to those of the little group of poets in Florence to which he belonged. To dissemble his love, Dante tells us, he wrote various verses to a screen lady, so that Beatrice withheld her salutation in such a pronounced manner that the poet exclaimed: "I have held my feet on that part of life beyond which no man can go with intent to return." Beatrice's mockery pierces the pride of the poet to the quick and creates a crisis in his life. Up to this period his love had been introspective, henceforth his thoughts and speech go out in spiritual adoration of his beloved. This change of center causes him to drop the conventional and artificial from his verses and to become real. He adopts the *dolce stil nuovo,* the sweet, new style, which expresses genuine

[2] Norton's translation.

emotion in a natural way. This change of direction not only modifies his mode of speech and his theme, it places his happiness upon securer foundations: for adoration is a more permanent source of inspiration than introspection.

The third and most vital experience of all came in the sudden death of Beatrice. The thought of the possibility of this sorrow had saddened his verses, but now the blow falls, and the poet exclaims: *"Quo modo sedet sola civitas plena populo!"* Instead of an outburst of passionate grief this composed and subtile poet falls into a profound meditation on the meaning of the mystical number nine. The number three is the symbol of the Trinity and nine is three multiplied by itself, and is therefore a symbol of momentous spiritual import. His awakened mind, during those months succeeding the death of his beloved, pondered long on her spiritual significance to his thought and life. He recalled that he was eighteen, twice nine years, when she gave him her most sweet salutation. He remembered another meeting when the beauty of the girl had smitten his heart; eagerly he reckoned back the years and found to his delight that he was then at the end of his ninth year and she at the beginning of her ninth. In his first sonnet he had noted that Love had appeared to him when one-third of the night had passed. This chance line is now to him full of mystical significance, he thinks he perceives a hidden spiritual purpose. If the vision appeared in the fourth hour of the night, was not this the first of the last nine hours of the night, and therefore pregnant with divine intimations? Another vision of Love he remembers came to him in the ninth hour of the day, though the verse he wrote at the time made no mention of it. During a grievous illness he had a most distressing dream of Beatrice's death, of which Rossetti has painted an impressive picture, and now he figures it out that the dream occurred in the ninth day of his sickness. Another fact impressed him. Composing a *serventese* contain-

ing the names of sixty Florentine ladies he marveled to find that the name of his lady would consent to stand in no other place but the ninth. Again, after Beatrice's death, he was recalled from his infatuation with the lady of the window, by a strong imagination taking possession of him " about the hour of nones " of Beatrice in " those crimson garments in which she had first appeared to my eyes."

Dante's keen mind found a great joy and supposed insight into the divine plans by untangling the mysterious significance of the date of his lady's death. It took place on the eighth day of June, 1290. The poet then takes this date to pieces and displays the hidden signet of God displayed therein. " I say that, according to the mode of reckoning in Arabia, her most noble soul departed in the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and, according to the reckoning in Syria, she departed in the ninth month of the year, since the first month there is Tisrin, which with us is October. And according to our reckoning, she departed in that year of our indiction, that is, of the years of the Lord, in which the perfect number was completed for the ninth time in that century in which she had been set in this world: and she was of the Christians of the thirteenth century. One reason why this number was so friendly to her may be this: since, according to Ptolemy and according to the Christian truth, there are nine heavens which move, and according to the common astrological opinion, the said heavens work effects here below according to their respective positions, this number was her friend to the end that it might be understood that at her generation all the nine movable heavens were in most perfect relation. This is one reason thereof; but considering more subtilely and according to the infallible truth, this number was she herself; I mean by similitude, and I intend it thus: the number three is the root of nine, for, without any other number, multiplied

by itself it makes nine, as we see plainly that three times three make nine. Therefore, since three is the factor by itself of nine, and the Author of miracles by himself is three, namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three and one, this Lady was accompanied by the number nine, that it might be understood that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, whose only root is the marvelous Trinity. Perchance even a more subtile reason might be seen herein by a more subtile person; but this is that which I see for it, and which best pleases me." Thus does the poet bring three calendars, Arabian, Syrian and Christian to bear on this simple date to wrest spiritual value from it. The infinite pains he takes shows a mind that will not disregard facts and a peculiar mysticism that scents secret meanings in every event. We can imagine the intellectual glow that came to the young poet's aroused mind as he seemed to discover significance after significance in the various trifling incidents of his love. God had indeed come to him in Beatrice. She was not only the fairest of gentle ladies, but her nature was rooted in the Trinity itself. She was God's messenger to him. Meditating upon these high themes he wrote the final sonnet of the *Vita Nuova* in which the metamorphosis of his lady is seen to be taking place. He beholds her in the highest heaven clothed in such glory that Love's reporting words are dark.

Then follows an account of his fourth epochal experience. "After this sonnet, a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things which made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one, until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain to this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knows. So that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live, that my life be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman. And then may it please Him who is the Lord of Grace, that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that

blessed Beatrice, who in glory looks upon the face of Him *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus* (who is blessed forever)."

This is the insight we obtain into the mystical qualities of Dante's genius from the facts evident in this first revelation of himself. He heard no voices, he saw no blinding light, he was not initiated into trance-like states. It was through the ornamented gateway of beauty that the power of the Eternal entered his soul. Not the beauty of nature which disturbed Wordsworth "with the joy of elevated thoughts," but the beauty of woman; not the charm of physical loveliness, but those spiritual graces which adorn womanhood, gentleness, courtesy, humility. The passion aroused was not that of a troubadour for his mistress, or a knight for his lady, but an ardent spiritual passion for an ethereal ideal. It was an aesthetic mysticism,— God revealed through the aesthetic sense. Such was the mysticism of Shelley, whose genius had so much in common with Dante that he has interpreted the Florentine in many marvelous verses. In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, written when he was twenty-four, he describes his awakening sense of "the awful shadow of some unseen Power" that "floats unseen amongst us."

> "When musing deeply on the lot
> Of Life, at the sweet time when the winds are wooing
> All vital things that wake to bring
> News of birds and blossoming —
> Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
> I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!
> I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
> To thee and thine."

The extremely sensitive nature both of Dante and Shelley in the springtime of their days quivered under the spell of the Spirit of Beauty, only to the elder poet the beauty had

more of a religious meaning and was personal in the spiritual grace of a woman.

A quickened mind soon becomes aware of many unsuspected interests, and Dante, having had one glimpse of the sacramental nature of the world, thanks to his thorough mediævalism, at once laid hold of the cryptic writing of the eternal in the temporal, and was preoccupied with the significance of numbers, symbolism and allegory. In the *Vita Nuova* the mysticism of the poetry, which is earlier than the prose, is the passion for spiritual beauty; the mystical element of the prose has to do with symbolism, especially the significance of numbers. Meditation on these things has fruition in an intuition, which Dante calls a vision, of what Beatrice might mean to him, his art and to the world.

Although our poet did not see visions and hear voices after the manner of some mystics, we should not fail to notice that vision and audition both are prominent features of this early work. Love is not to him a suffused emotion, but is beheld as a shining God, a lord of fearful aspect, a youth in white garments, a pilgrim meanly clad. These visions are not the hallucinations of an over stimulated mind, rather they appear to result from a powerful imagination which spontaneously visualizes its creations and personifies ideals.

Voices also call through the pages of this volume. Dante conceived Love so vividly and dramaticaly that he conversed with him. But the voices are never beyond his control. They are his stage instruments. For the most part they appear in the prose which was written years after the event. And it is to be noted that frequently Love speaks in Latin. As the poet claimed that he first met Beatrice when he was nine years of age, and as at twenty-five he confessed that he read Cicero with difficulty, it is not to be supposed that at that memorable meeting a voice actually called to him saying in the ancient tongue: *"Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi."*

Between the closing of the *Vita Nuova* and the opening of the *Divina Commedia* is a period of some two decades. During this time Beatrice is indeed a holy memory, sometimes, perhaps, a spiritual presence, but God no longer reveals himself to the poet through the graces of womanhood. The way of communication now is the Truth. The Spirit of Beauty is superseded by the Spirit of Truth as the avenue of approach to God. For consolation in the death of his beloved Dante turned to the study of philosophy, not as a modern student, languidly conscious of the limitations of the human mind and of the fallibility of all systems of thought; but with the eagerness and assurance of the mediæval student who is persuaded that the very heart and glory of truth may be known.

After the manner of Boëthius, who was his model, Dante personified Philosophy and sang her praises in a volume entitled *Il Convivio, the Banquet.* His doctrine of Love is here clearly mystical:

"Love, truly taken and nobly considered, is naught else than the spiritual union of the soul and of the thing loved: to which union the soul, of her own nature, runs swift or slow, according as she is free or impeded." [3]

Of the rapture of his love of truth Dante has borne ample testimony. He turned to philosophy thinking to find silver and instead he found gold. He felt so much of "her sweetness that love of her expelled all other thought." He found her a "lady full of all sweetness, adorned with virtue, wonderful in knowledge, glorious in liberty." "Oh, most sweet and unutterable looks, of a sudden ravishing the mind, which appears in the demonstrations in the eyes of Philosophy when she discourses to her lovers."

But noble and genuine as was this philosophical love, it was superseded and in part condemned by a more worthy affection which his deepening experiences of life produced.

[3] *Convivio III,* 2, 18.

When Dante was in his forty-eighth year, in 1313, he was a woefully disillusioned man. He felt most bitterly that the Papal hierarchy were misleading the people in spiritual interests, while the appointed guide in temporal affairs, Henry VII, had failed and was dead. To his lacerated spirit Philosophy seemed a cold comfort, and lyrics to her praise a childish play. He needed God, else he would be driven to despair. He would have done with artistic trifles and seek for himself and proclaim to others the way of life. This he does in the *Divinia Commedia.*

This mediæval miracle of song has many meanings. It is the most powerful political pamphlet ever written; it is the world's greatest poem, it is more than a cross section of Italy in 1300; it is the quintessence of the spirit of ten centuries. In it Dante appears as the representative of humanity as well as in his own *propria persona.* We shall consider it only as it reveals the poet's characteristic mysticism.

It is thoroughly mystical in that it is a pilgrimage from a dark confused forest to God. Dante sets out in full self-reliance to climb the sunlit mountain, but his own strength is insufficient; the beasts of incontinence, pride and avarice are too powerful for him and he is driven back again into the dark forest "where the sun is silent." Here Virgil, reason illumined by divine grace, appears to lead him among the truly dead that he may know what sin is and what its awful consequences are. After the journey through Hell, Virgil leads Dante up the steeps of Purgatory to show him the effects of sin on the human soul, and the method of cleansing its stain and escaping its power.

Having led the way through purgatorial discipline by which the glorious liberty of the children of God is attained, human reason can do no more. Divine Revelation personified by Beatrice meets the poet on the summit of Purgatory and conducts him through the stars to the Empyrean — the timeless, spaceless existence — where God and the redeemed

dwell in eternal felicity. Here Dante by spiritual intuition gazes into the depths of the splendors of the Living Light Eternal and experiences the goal of all mysticism,— that supreme, ecstatic moment of understanding which reveals all things in God and God in all things, and gives perfect peace and reconciliation. It is interesting to note in this pilgrimage how thoroughly Catholic is the mystical journey. The Protestant believes that the way to God is so plain that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein. Let the seeker only love with his whole heart and he will keep the way. Thus John Bunyan's Christian has companions but no infallible guide save the book in his hand. To the Catholic Dante, on the other hand, the way is so obscured by darkness and so steep that the poet is never for a moment without a guide to direct his steps.

The whole conception and machinery of the poem is mystical. The desire of the soul for the Good is the impelling motive of every action. God, whose glory penetrates everywhere through the universe, has implanted something of his divine fire in every human heart. This sacred flame moves spontaneously toward God its source, as the fire mounts toward the heavens. But owing to imperfect intelligence man follows false images of good, and thus forsakes the true path. Consequently he needs a guide to reveal the way. His love is also excessive or defective as well as perverted, and to "set love in order" is the key to the discipline of the Purgatory. Urged on by love, walking in the way that sets love in order, the pilgrim soul will come at last to that vision of the divine Love whose availing glory shall subdue all rebellion and win the heart to perfect peace and reconciliation.

The Beatific Vision, which is described in the closing cantos of the *Paradiso,* is to my mind the most glorious achievement of the constructive literary imagination. Probably I have read it a hundred times, and never without those

creeping sensations of the spine which result when the very center of one's being is shaken. I thoroughly endorse Cardinal Manning's tribute: "No uninspired hand has ever written thoughts so high in words so resplendent as the last stanza of the *Divina Commedia.* It was said of St. Thomas, *Post Summam Thomae nihil restat nisi lumen gloriae!* It may be said of Dante *Post Dantis Paradisum nihil restat nisi visio Dei.*'" Let me quote the familiar and immortal lines. "O Supreme Light, that so high upliftest Thyself from mortal conceptions, re-lend to my mind a little of what Thou didst appear, and make my tongue so powerful that it may be able to leave one single spark of Thy glory for the folk to come; for, by returning somewhat to my memory and by sounding a little in these verses, more of Thy victory shall be conceived.

"I think that by the keenness of the living ray which I endured, I should have been dazed if my eyes had been averted from it; and I remember that on this account I was the more hardy to sustain it till I conjoined my gaze with the Infinite Goodness.

"O abundant Grace, whereby I presumed to fix my look through the Eternal Light till that there I consummated the seeing! I saw that in its depth is enclosed, bound up with love in one volume, that which is dispersed in leaves through the universe; substance and accidents and their modes, fused together, as it were, in such wise, that that of which I speak is one simple Light. The universal form of this knot I believe that I saw, because, in saying this, I feel that I rejoice more speciously. . . . Thus my mind, wholly rapt, was gazing fixed, motionless, and intent, and ever with gazing grew enkindled. In that Light one becomes such that it is impossible he should ever consent to turn himself from it for other sight; because the Good which is the object of the will is all collected in it, and outside of it that is defective which is perfect there.

"Now will my speech fall more short, even in respect to that which I remember, than that of an infant who still bathes his tongue at the breast. Not because more than one simple semblance was in the Living Light wherein I was gazing, which is always such as it was before; but through my sight, which was growing strong in me as I looked, one sole appearance, as I myself changed, was altering itself to me.

"Within the profound and clear subsistence of the Lofty Light appeared to me three circles of three colors and one dimension; and one seemed reflected by the other, as Iris by Iris, and the third seemed fire from which the one and from the other is equally breathed forth.

"O how inadequate is speech, and how feeble toward my conception! and this toward what I saw is such that it suffices not to call it little.

"O Light Eternal, that sole abidest in Thyself, sole understandest Thyself, and, by Thyself understood and understanding, lovest and smilest on Thyself! That circle, which appeared in Thee generated as a reflected light, being awhile surveyed by my eyes, seemed to me depicted with our effigy within itself, of its own very color; wherefore my sight was wholly set upon it. As is the geometer who wholly applies himself to measure the circle, and finds not by thinking that principle of which he is in need, such was I at that new sight. I wished to see how the image was conformed to the circle, and how it has its place therein; but my own wings were not for this, had it not been that my mind was smitten by a flash in which its wish came.

"To the high fantasy here power failed; but now my desires and my will were revolved, like a wheel which is moved evenly, by the love which moves the sun and the other stars."

That Dante was in intellectual sympathy with the leading mystics of the Middle Ages and that he has clearly set

forth the science of mysticism as it was conceived in his time, is beyond dispute.

The question now arises: To what extent did Dante personally experience this mystical love and union? To my mind Dante could not easily escape having a genuine mystical experience. For years he brooded on his vast, terrible and resplendent theme. His vivid and powerful imagination would make his conception most real to him. Such flaming thoughts held tenaciously in mind through a period of years would transform his character and lift him to the heights of emotional exaltation. In the quiet of Ravenna he could not dwell closely with Beatrice and the stars, contemplating month by month and even year by year the transcendent splendor of those realms of glory without having his heart and will made submissive to the Divine Love. It is not strange that he affirms in the first canto of the *Paradiso:* "In the heaven which receives most of His light I have been, and have seen things which he who descends from there above neither knows how nor has the power to recount." In his dedication letter to Can Grande he declares that his own unworthiness is no argument to be used against God making him a messenger through whom to communicate His will, for even Nebuchadnezzar received divine revelation. In the closing lines of his vision he solemnly affirms that after his high fantasy had failed "my desire and my will were revolved like a wheel that evenly is turned by the love that moves the sun and other stars." Most conclusive of all perhaps is the testimony of the last sonnet he wrote, that to Giovanni Quirino,

> The King by whose rich grace His servants be
> With plenty beyond measure set to dwell
> Ordains that I my bitter wrath dispel
> And lift mine eyes to the great consistory;
> Till, noting how in glorious choirs agree

The citizens of that fair citadel,
To the Creator I, His creature, swell
Their song, and all their love possesses me.
So, when I contemplate the great reward
To which our God has called the Christian seed,
I long for nothing else but only this.
And then my soul is grieved in thy regard,
Dear friend, who reck'st not of thy nearest need,
Renouncing for slight joys the perfect bliss.[4]

SUMMARY

That mysticism was woven into the very structure of Dante's mind there can be no question. He saw all things *sub specie aeternitatis*. Things seen were but the thin veil hiding and revealing the Unseen. It was in the eternal world that he habitually dwelt. He went into the eternal to find the true meaning of life. That he ended each section of the *Divina Commedia* with the word "stars" indicates that he saw all things against the background of the Everlasting. But the special characteristics of his mysticism must be noted.

His mystical sense was quite unlike Wordsworth's. In nature he did not perceive

"Something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns."

Nature indeed calmed his hot and imperious heart, especially the light of the stars and the mystery of the immense spaces. Yet nature was only the palette from which he took many colors, her ordered glories did not quicken his sense of God or awaken "that serene and blessed mood of harmony, and the deep power of joy to see into the life of things."

He was too good a Catholic, and too convinced a Roman, not to find God in history; but it was a deduction of his intellect; he did not see God in the teeming life of the men of his day. Rather, like Newman, he looked into this busy,

[4] Rossetti's translation.

living world and saw no reflection of its Creator. It appeared to him "nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of lamentations, and mourning, and woe." And, like Newman, he felt the need of an infallible interposition to rescue and guide humanity.

Neither was his the mysticism of a loving and fervent heart. Unlike St. Francis whom he greatly reverenced, or St. Bernard whom he chose for his interpreter amid the splendors of the Great White Rose, he had no sweet and precious sense of the presence of Christ during that terrible journey of his. God to him was the Emperor of the Heavens, Christ the God-man who had made the supreme atonement, but Dante did not talk with God as friend to friend, or commune with Christ as with a dear companion.

His was the mysticism of Plato glorified by the fire that was in Shelley. His emotions were always kept in strict subordination to his intellectual perceptions. Even in the unveiled splendor of the Fountain of Living Light Eternal he suffered no rapture to merge the outlines of his identity with the glory about him. In full possession of all his faculties, and in his proper individuality, he stands a clearly outlined figure against the intolerable radiance of the Perfect Light. Unlike many mystics he did not confuse good and evil in a pantheistic mist. The line demarking them was distinct even in the highest heaven. Nature might be phenomenal, but not the wicked spirit.

I have just stated that Dante's mysticism was a cross between that of Shelley and Plato. The spiritual beauty of a Florentine maiden led his thoughts to the throne of God. Her grace was the revelation of the divine Love. At her death his mind was arrested by the occurrence of the number nine in his relationship with her. She was a nine, a miracle, and this belief gave his mysticism a peculiarly mediæval coloring. In those early days the passion of the poet was stronger than the ardor of the mystic. Not until he wrote

the closing sonnet of the *Vita Nuova* and its prose commentary did his mystic passion suffuse his pages. Upon the death of Beatrice he turned to truth and sought it until the sight of his eyes was blurred, and he grew lean from vigils. Like Plato he would attain the vision of God by the process of reflective thought. He had an intuition of the One in the Many rather than a feeling of the divine Friend. With all his love of philosophy our poet had little of the serene temper of the true philosopher. His heart was too passionate and intense. The cold, crystalline vision that enraptured the mind of the greatest of Greeks was not that which Dante framed by his glowing imagination. At first he personified Philosophy as a rare maiden, whose glowing eyes represented the demonstration of truth, and the radiance of her smile its persuasion. Dante is as yet only the philosophic troubadour yearning for the laurel. He has entered the Temple of Truth and known full well the joys of study, but into the Arcanum where every personal wrong and ambition is forgotten in ecstacy of communion with God's splendor he has not entered.

But as he searched through the books of his day on science and theology and mystical love how unified and resplendent was that conception of Reality which searched through every avenue of emotion and aspiration! The Ptolemaic conception of the universe, and the medieval theology were easily woven into a system complete and readily visualized, and in our poet's mind this scheme of things became anything but a dry scholastic system. His imperial imagination saw it stand as a flaming and many-hued object of adoration. What a vision it was! God, the Eternal Light in his timeless, spaceless Empyrean! Nine hierarchies of angels circling about him gaze with fascinated vision into the ever unfolding depths of divine wisdom and grace. The wonders they behold enflame their hearts with quenchless love and call forth in them supernatural powers of service. The light and love of God

passing through their angelic minds stream down through all the revolving heavens and penetrate everywhere through the universe, while all created intelligences aspiring toward the answering love of God cause a cosmic dance of love. Love is the center and circumference of all things. Love is the goal and guide of every pilgrim soul.

Prolonged contemplation of this inspiring interpretation of truth profoundly changed Dante's character. It became impossible for him to be the mere troubadour either of Beauty or of Philosophy. To continue the *Convivio* was impossible. He must make the whole vision manifest. He is called to be a prophet of the Highest. He must arouse men from their sleep of sin and show the way to true felicity. Therefore he writes the *Divina Commedia* to reveal the nature of sin, the way of escape and the path to God.

Continued meditation on the divine truths enkindled in the poet-prophet a thirst for that all penetrating glance into the heart of Truth which is the goal of the desire of every intellectual mystic. "Well I know that the mind never sated is unless the Truth illumine it beyond which naught else extends." To behold the splendor of the Ultimate Truth, to stand as the representative of humanity before the Fountain of the Living Light Eternal, to interpret as far as human speech could do the final mystery, this became the audacious purpose of the poet. The troubadour has long been dead within him; the artist eager for the laurel has perished, it is only the mystic passion within him now that urges him on to look into the face of God. Choosing St. Bernard, symbol of the mind's intuitive power, "who on earth tasted of this bliss," as his guide, Dante advanced into the center of the Mystical White Rose and joined his gaze to that point of intensest Light in whose depths he beheld the ultimate mysteries. And how could a vivid mind like his hold before it continuously that vision without having its intolerable glory stamp the divine stigmata on his soul?

That Dante's mysticism was thoroughly of the intellectual sort is proved by the structure of the *Paradiso*. There is not a sensuous line in it. No golden streets or gates of pearl. No languishing embrace of lovers. It is a Paradise such as Sir Isaac Newton might have conceived; the heaven of a mathematician, beholding the ever heightening beauty of truth, not defining truth, but dealing in its symbols — the point and the circle. And God is neither the anthropomorphic Being of Milton and the artists, nor an abstraction of the philosophers,— Reason, Thought, a Principle; but Light, "Light intellectual, full of love, love of true good, full of joy, joy that transcends every sweetness."

If I put my thought in a phrase of my own coining, and therefore perhaps awkward and inadequate, I should call Dante an aesthetico-intellectual mystic, for he found God by beholding "the beauty of truth enkindled along the stairway of the eternal palace."

# THE MYSTICISM OF MEISTER ECKHART

RUFUS M. JONES

Among the mystics who have reached "the shining tableland to which our God Himself is moon and sun," Meister Eckhart most surely belongs. The details of his life are nearly all lost and one needs to say "probably" before almost all statements about him. He was born in the village of Hochheim in Thuringia, not far from Gotha, somewhat before 1260. In his fifteenth year he entered the Dominican Order at Erfurt, where Luther was later to distinguish himself. The Order was at its height at this time and attracted the most highly endowed and thoughtful youth, among whom Eckhart was a shining example. He seems to have continued his studies in Cologne under Albertus, then venerable with age, the greatest teacher of the time, the one scholar who has won the title of "Magnus," and the master who inspired and trained Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). He was chosen Prior of the Dominican Convent at Erfurt and was made Vicar for the district of Thuringia and thus the great scholar, who was to glorify silence and contemplation, found himself in a tangle of intricate practical problems.

He was sent to Paris in 1300 on important business for the Order and with the intent that he should complete his studies at this great center of learning. He appears to have spent two years in Paris and to have won the title "Meister," by which he has been ever since known. At a later time he seems to have spent a second period in Paris and to have taught in the University. During the next twenty years

after becoming "Meister" he was one of the leading administrators of the Dominican Order in Germany, compelled to take long and frequent journeys and to be immersed in the details and controversies of an extensive religious Society. He appears to have spent a period in Frankfurt as Dominican preacher, a somewhat longer one in Strasbourg and to have settled in Cologne as Teacher in the Dominican School there, probably about 1320.

Two of the great mystics of the fourteenth century, Johannes Tauler and Heinrich Suso, came under his influence during the Cologne period. Other persons heard him, wondered, were touched and moved, went their way and engaged in the pursuits of life. These two men heard him, listened with their souls, had the creative fire kindled within them and became altered forever under the inspiration and impact of their teacher. Not only these two pillar mystics among his contemporaries, but almost all succeeding mystics as well, were influenced by the great spiritual scholar. He takes his place in the small list of those guiding thinkers who through the ages have marked out the mystic path which multitudes of humbler souls have walked.

He was a successful administrator, but his greatest vocation was that of preacher. He preached usually in the vernacular speech and drew large throngs to hear him. It is one of the amazing characteristics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that the people of those times were able to understand the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the poetry of Dante and the sermons of Meister Eckhart. Few college students of the present day are competent for any one of these three tasks. The most difficult of the three tasks is understanding Eckhart's sermons to which the common people flocked, as they did a little later to hear Tauler in Strasbourg.

It was an age of mysticism, in the schools, in the cloister, in literature, in philosophy and among the common people.

Many popular forms of mysticism were abroad, some of them good and some of them bad. It was a fermenting, seething period when religion was the main business of life. The Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Beghards, the Beguines and many other loosely mystical brotherhoods were to be found up and down the Rhine Valley and, to a less extent, in other parts of Germany. Meister Eckhart was very familiar with their teaching and their ways. His circuit had been a wide one and he was an expert in these matters. He preached sermons sometimes which left the common earth and its practical problems far behind, but he never lost, as some of the lesser mystics of the time did, the distinction of right and wrong, of good and evil. He had a profound regard for moral implications. He would go as far as any one in his insistence upon a Divine Light within the soul, but he had one criterion by which he distinguished inner Light from darkness — the Light, if it was Light, must guide the recipient into truth and goodness, it could not promote anything which entangled the life in looseness or evil. "There are," he declared in a sermon, "people who say, if I have God and His love, I may do what I like. That is a false idea of liberty. When thou wishest a thing contrary to God and His law thou hast not the love of God in thee."[1] One of the clearest and noblest of all his words declared: *"No person is ever free from the consequences of sin until he is free of sin."*[2]

During the closing period of his life Eckhart was suspected of being unorthodox and was charged with "heresies" in a series of twenty-eight propositions. The technical "heresies" of which he was suspected need not concern us now. "He wished to know more than he should," is the interesting verdict which the Pope gave after the good man

[1] Pfeiffer's *Meister Eckhart* Vol. II *of Deutsche Mystiker,* Leipzig, 1857, p. 232.
[2] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 664.

had died, with his heresy trial not yet finished. "Orthodox" in the strict sense he was not, but he was pure, sincere, profound, loving, adoring, burning with unmixed passion for God. We may well match these great characteristics of his soul off against the modicum of error that may have existed in the twenty-eight propositions collected out of his sermons.

It is unfortunate that in relation to Eckhart we possess so little material of an autobiographical character. Personal accounts of *experience* are of first importance in studying a mystic. It is of some value, no doubt, to find out what type of metaphysics he held and what were his theories about the soul's relation to God, but these things are poor substitutes for the person's own description of what happened to him and what he *knew first hand*. Just because we possess no "Confessions," no revealing autobiography, of Eckhart the studies of him have usually taken an abstract turn and are, as they are bound to be, cold, dry and hard to read. His style is difficult, because he is fond of epigram and breathlessly bold paradox. Furthermore he was using a language not yet adapted for the expression of such profound and subtle thought, and finally he goes down into that inner region of life for which no language has coined words of easy description. In all these particulars he was like Heraclitus the Dark, whose famous fragment would have pleased Eckhart: "You cannot find the boundaries of the soul by going in any direction, so deep and bottomless it is."

If he wrote the story of "Schwester Katrie" (Sister Cathie) which is usually attributed to him he was very probably suggesting, in his account of another's experience, what a long hard road of discipline must be traveled before the soul can get beyond words about God and can come fully home to Him. "You must learn," he says, "not only to ascend, but to descend." "You must know the lonely place of peace as a man knows his own courtyard." It is not a state of feelings; it is a work of mind and will coöperating

with Grace. One of his contemporaries bore this interesting testimony of him, that "God kept nothing hid" from Meister Eckhart, which implies that he himself never spared the "toil of heart and knees and hands" that won the spiritual heights where he arrived.[3]

Nothing can be more completely false than the view that the mystic's way is a lazy man's expedient. Modern Christians are inclined to look back upon the thirteenth century as a time of superstition and darkness and to suppose that the mediæval saints withdrew from the stern affairs of life and adopted superficial, rose-water methods of dealing with sin. Few of us, I am afraid, are made of the fiber to endure the discipline, to bear the crucifixions, to undergo the mental training, to stand the strain of concentration and contemplation required for even the beginner on the mystic pathway. The attainments of the outstanding figures like Eckhart and Ruysbroeck are wholly beyond the range of what is possible to us to-day, I will not say in deed, but even in thought and imagination. "With all his powers one must pray," our mystic says. "Eyes, ears, heart, mouth and the whole mind must be given to it."[4]

Meister Eckhart was in one particular at least a forerunner of the Reformation. He put a very low estimate upon what had come to be called "works" or "merits." He went so far as to say that it was a suggestion of the Devil that salvation depended upon fastings, vigils, mortifications and external performances. These things have no magic for him. He felt that even works of pity and compassion, done to secure salvation, were likewise inadequate. They belong to the stage of the servant, not that of the free son. There must be an *inner work,* he always insists. The motive, the attitude of the soul, the birth of love and de-

[3] "Diz ist Meister Eckehart
Dem Got nie niht verbarc."

[4] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* pp. 544–5.

votion are the essential matters. Even ecstasies are no indication that one has arrived at his goal. They are temporary and fleeting. They do not indicate spiritual height or sublimity. The soul must attain an abiding possession, a permanent union with God, and then the inner state will determine the outer activities. It is only a weak spiritual life that leans upon outward garb and external works, but when the inward life is pure and free from selfishness one will be ready to leave an ecstasy of the highest degree, even like that of St. Paul's, to carry a cup of soup to a poor needy person.[5] When once the soul is joined in union with God, then nothing is too hard, no labors or suffering, no privations or losses. "Torment not thyself [i. e., with mortifications]; if God lays sufferings on thee, bear them. If He gives thee honors and fortunes, bear them with no less readiness. One man cannot do all things; he must do some one thing; but in this one he can comprehend all things. If the obstacle is not in thee, thou canst as well have God present with thee by the fire or in the stall as in devout prayer. Thou mayest arrive at the state in which thou shalt have God essentially dwelling in thee; thou shalt be in God and God in thee." [6]

Not less in the spirit of the Reformation were his emphasis on the importance of individual religious experience and his lack of emphasis on the sphere and function of the Church and ecclesiastical machinery. Doctrine, orthodoxy, sacraments, priests, the Virgin Mary, take a very lowly and subordinate place in his thought. Love, faith, earnestness, purity, consecration count infinitely more than conformity to system does. "Mary is blessed not because she bore Christ

[5] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 553. See also p. 330 and p. 543.

[6] The passage quoted is not a literal translation, but a paraphrase of a striking sermon by Eckhart. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 543–578. The paraphrase is taken in part from Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, New York, 1874, Vol. I, p. 480.

bodily but because she bore him spiritually, and in this particular every one can be like her." [7]

The most important point in Eckhart's teaching to select for consideration in a short exposition like this is his doctrine of the soul. He arrived at his conception of the soul along two paths, one of them the path of experience and the other the path of metaphysics, which is experience deeply reflected upon. Mere metaphysics does not make one a mystic. We do not properly call a man a mystic unless through the inner way, in silence and contemplation, or by the tapping of interior reservoirs of energy, he feels himself to be in contact and correspondence with the realm of spiritual resources and emerges from his experience with the conviction alive within him that God and man have somehow been finding each other.

No one can read Eckhart without feeling assured that such experiences were an important part of his life. He speaks always as though he had been *there.* There is a glow, a fervor, a radiance breaking through his rugged mediæval German sentences which leave no doubt in the mind of the stumbling reader that this man knows what he is talking about and that if we could see his luminous face and could revisualize his transformed, dynamic personality we should understand why the common people flocked to hear him and why Tauler and Suso were changed through their fellowship with him. Take words like these which he spoke in one of his sermons: "Earth cannot escape the sky, let it flee as it will up or down; the sky flows into it and makes it fruitful whether it will or not. *So does God to man. He who will escape Him only runs to His bosom; for all corners of the world are open to Him.*" [8] That does not sound like dialectic, it is first-hand testimony. "Truth," he says, "must be inwardly won"; "the eternal word must be heard

[7] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 280.
[8] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 287.

and understood in ourselves and we must be inwardly united to God." [9] That is not theory, it is knowledge of acquaintance.

But at the same time Eckhart did have a very carefully thought out theory of the nature of the soul. He has gathered his point of view from many sources, both Christian and pagan. It has been suggested [10] that there is a strong Arabian influence apparent in Eckhart's conception of the soul, especially the influence of Averroes. Such influence is not impossible, but it does not seem to me necessary to go out of the beaten track of European thought, leading back to Aristotle for the sources of the peculiar psychology of Eckhart. "The apex of the mind" (das hochste der selen vernunftigkeit) is unsundered from God. We now realize that the retina of the eye is to all intents and purposes a projected part of the brain, somewhat so Eckhart thinks that there is an active, creative principle in man's soul which through all the mutability of time and space binds us back into our divine origin and holds us firmly in Him who made us for Himself. Eckhart calls this central principle of the soul the "Fünklein," *spark,* or *flash,* or *glimmer.* Sometimes he names it with an old German word, now obsolete, the "Ganster" (das ganster des geistes, p. 670; or daz obeste gensterlein, p. 79). This word also means *spark* or *gleam,* and in a passage on page 79 of Pfeiffer's edition he says that this highest light-spark in the soul is never separated from God and operates directly, i. e., without any mediation. It is the Principle which the schoolmen called *synteresis,* the divine *ground* of the soul, the essential spiritual nature in man, which makes him exercise faith, become responsive to God and capable of salvation in the deeper sense. The word *scintilla* had sometimes been used for this innermost faculty,

[9] *Ibid.* p. 24.
[10] See *Karl Pearson in Mind,* Vol. XI, 1886.

a word which Eckhart put into popular speech and made current for the succeeding centuries, as Fünklein.

Aristotle had made a sharp distinction between active reason and passive reason, the higher and lower functions of the soul. Eckhart used these terms very frequently: *Der mench hat eine Wirkende vernunft und eine lîdende vernunft.*[11] (Man has an active reason and a passive reason.) The interpreters of Aristotle, even before the Christian era had settled upon the conclusion that the active reason was a gift of God to the soul — was in fact something of the actual substance of God contributed to the soul and forming the basis and ground of man's spiritual nature. No other doctrine had such a weighty influence on the entire history of Christian mysticism as this Aristotelean conception of the soul had. However dark and pessimistic were the prevailing theological views of man there were always some Christians to be found who held fast to this idea, which they attributed to the great Greek master, that the apex of the soul was an inalienable contribution of God to the spiritual structure in man. Passive reason, with its senses and emotions was wholly dependent for its material upon the influences of the external environment, but "active reason" was *pure,* super-empirical and always as near God as thought is near the mind that thinks it —"God is nearer to me," Eckhart says, "than I am to myself."[12] With this central conception of the soul Eckhart quite naturally exalted *silence* as a way of worship and made very much indeed of *Abgescheidenheit,* i. e., withdrawal of the soul from the impact of the senses and the appeal of the emotions — all that is of the "creature." "God is near us," he says, "but we are far from Him; God is within but we are without; God is at home but we are away in a far country."[13] In a fine

[11] Pfeiffer, *op cit.,* p. 16.
[12] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 221.
[13] *Ibid.* p. 223.

passage in the second sermon of Pfeiffer's collection he says: "The soul, with all its powers, has divided and scattered itself in outward things, each according to its functions: the power of sight in the eye, the power of hearing in the ear, the power of taste in the tongue, and thus they are the less able to work inwardly, for every power which is divided is imperfect. So the soul, if she would work inwardly, must call home all her powers and collect them from all divided things to one inward work. . . . If a man will work an inward work, he must pour all his powers into himself as into a corner of the soul, and must hide himself from all images and forms, and then he can work. Then he must come into a forgetting and a not-knowing. He must be in a stillness and silence, where the Word may be heard. One cannot draw near to this Word better than by stillness and silence: then it is heard and understood in utter ignorance. When one knows nothing it is opened and revealed. Then we shall become aware of the Divine Ignorance, and our ignorance will be ennobled and adorned with supernatural knowledge. And when we simply keep ourselves receptive, we are more perfect than when at work." [14]

The best way to enter into Life is to keep silence, to let God speak and to let Him work. This happens best when the human powers are stilled and the "creature" is suppressed.[15] But Eckhart and the great mystics do not mean by "silence" a stagnant, inactive soul. They mean, on the contrary, a soul from the first awake, alive, with the deeplying unsuspected energies in full action. The surface self is dormant, the peripheral man is brought to quiet, but that innermost ground of our spiritual nature is awake, operative and aware of the real divine environment that surrounds it. God is always more ready to give Himself than

[14] *Ibid.* p. 13. I have used Evelyn Underhill's translation given in her *Mysticism,* New York, 1911, p. 381.
[15] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 18.

we are to receive Him, and He needs us as much as we need Him.[16] "You shall sink away from your selfhood," this bold mystic tells us, "you shall flow into His selfhood and your *you* shall become completely changed into His *Mine,* so that you apprehend eternally with Him His uncreated essential being.[17] The highest process, the supreme attainment here, or even hereafter, for this great mystic is the birth of God, the bringing forth of the Son in man. Eckhart, when he is in these high regions, never makes his meaning very clear. He startles with his paradoxes, but he does not supply the seeker with much concrete description. He is saying, as all the most spiritual teachers have said, that the vital stage of religion is not reached until we get beyond the use of words and phrases, beyond ceremony and ritual, beyond historical events and things done for us by others, and exercise our own essential spiritual activities. In Saint Paul's words: "It is not circumcision that avails but a new creation." It is not a scrupulous observance of a sacred law that makes one Godlike; it is dying to the law, being crucified to even the loftiest external systems, until one can say out of his own experience: "It is no more I that live but Christ lives in me."

"Bringing forth the Son," is Eckhart's way of telling his generation that "works" are dead and empty things, that pilgrimages and masses, holy relics and prayers to saints fall far short of what constitutes the essential act of religion. This consists of an inward act of response to the divine presence inwardly revealed, a complete surrender of everything in the universe which separates the soul from Him, an undivided inclination of the whole inner being toward Him and an experience of revitalization comparable only to a resurrection from the dead. This, to Eckhart's mind, is the real business of the universe; suns and stars, mountains

[16] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* pp. 60 and 149.
[17] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 319.

and rivers, kings and thrones, generals with their victorious armies are dust and ashes compared with the spiritual rebirth of God in a human life. The joy is double. The soul rejoices as Mary rejoiced when Christ was born and God rejoices as does the shepherd when the sheep is found.

It is an unimportant question what Eckhart thought were the marks which forever distinguished Christ from the Son reborn in other men. One would need to ask the same question of Saint Paul. Christ was for them both the pattern revelation of the Son, but He is the first-born among many brethren, since God never ceases to bring forth His Son and to carry forward the revelation of His creative activity. "We are celebrating," Eckhart says in his first sermon, "the time of the Eternal Birth which God the Father brought forth and never ceases to bring forth to Eternity: a Birth which takes place in time and in human nature. Saint Augustine says this Birth is forever taking place. *But if it does not take place in me, what does it avail? Everything depends on this that He shall be born in me.*" [18]

The rebirth of the soul culminates in a union with God in which the soul is not lost but found. The united soul does not talk any more of *I,* or *me,* or *mine.* There is no longer any striving for things that are finite and indifferent. Such things are estimated at their real value. God is seen to be all there is worth having or loving or enjoying. The strain and stress are over. The soul has arrived. Activity, however, does not cease. On the contrary, God works now unhindered through the soul; the energies of God pulsate through the reborn man and make him a burning and shining light. Nothing is now too hard or difficult. Pain and hardship, losses and crosses are welcomed. "I say that after God there was never anything nobler than sorrow. Had there been anything nobler than sorrow, then surely the Father

[18] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* p. 3.

would have granted that to His Son, Jesus Christ. But we find that in His humanity there was no other thing of which Christ had so much as of sorrow. . . . If there had been anything nobler than sorrow then God would therewith have redeemed man." [19] It was not a stoic, "bloody but unbowed," who spoke the following message, it was a man whom God had brought very close to His loving heart: "That a man has a restful and peaceful life in God is good. That a man endures a painful life in patience, that is better; but that a man has his rest in the midst of a painful life, that is the best of all." [20]

Nowhere does Eckhart reveal more depth of insight than in the way he deals with time and space, but it is difficult to see how his listeners could have understood him as he took them into such breathless regions. Eternity never means for him something which begins after time ends, or mere endless time, or a going on forever. Eternity is an all-containing, all-inclusive, indivisible *Now*. "The *Now* in which God made the world is as near the present time as is the *now* in which I am speaking; and the Last Day is as near that *Now* as is our yesterday. Everything that God does is *an everpresent Now* (in eime gegenwürtigen nu)." [21] We live so much on the lower plane of passive reason with its discursive methods of spreading everything out in space and ticking it off in a clock-time succession that we fail to grasp things as they really are in a *miteinander* experience, i. e., as taking place in one integral whole of reality, the way for instance that we experience music and visible beauty. The *Eternal Birth* is an ascent from this lower plain of life to that table-land level where the soul *sees* spiritual things spiritually.

It is true in one sense that Eckhart was a quietist, even

[19] *Ibid.* 335.
[20] *Ibid.* p. 221.
[21] Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

that he was a father of quietists. He had no faith in the capacities of "mere man" (if there is any such being). He depreciated the "creature." He preached against the exercise of confidence in the finite self. He threw everybody back upon the work which God Himself works through the soul when man gets his creaturely self out of the way, removes the hindrances and allows God to act unimpeded. But this does not mean *passivity,* stagnation or cessation of action. It means action on a higher level, under higher guidance and direction. Instead of acting for petty ends and selfish aims, one now becomes a channel for the purpose of God to flow through. "All that a man receives through contemplation he must pour out in love."

It seems to me unimportant to discuss at length the distinction which Eckhart made between the Godhead and God. This was a common feature of systems which came under the influence of Plotinus, as Eckhart's did. The logic of these systems of thought seemed forced to go back to an absolute Reality, and in order to get an infinite, all-perfect Source, they felt compelled to retreat beyond all that was finite, all that was manifested or expressed, beyond all that could be defined, therefore beyond self-consciousness, will-purpose and all we mean by personality. They had to begin with a blank infinite, an absolute that was super-everything. The attainment of the conception of *a concrete infinite* is one of the supreme achievements of modern philosophy, and we shall not need to charge it up against Plotinus, Eckhart and Boehme that they found themselves forced to take refuge in the One, the Alone, the Undifferentiated Godhead (*die ungenaturte natur*). Their triumph consists in having attained such a degree of spiritual life and positive goodness when they were forced to work with such stubborn abstract concepts. Would that with our better equipment of intellectual furnishings we could equal them in dedication of spirit and holiness of life!

# THE MYSTICISM OF SAINT THERESA[1]

GEORGE WARREN RICHARDS

In a study of the mysticism of St. Theresa[2] we shall have to take account of those facts and incidents in her life and times which had a bearing on her religious experience.[3] She was born at Avila, in Old Castile, Spain, March 28th, 1515, and she died at Alva, in Leon, Spain, October 4th, 1582. Through the place of birth, she became a Spaniard, a Roman Catholic, and a counter-reformer. She was predisposed by her Spanish blood to a mystical type of piety. Rousselot says: "Mysticism is the philosophy of Spain."[4] It was the land of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, and of John of the Cross, Rome's "consummate ascetic." Both were contemporaries of St. Theresa and the three had mystical experiences though in different degrees.

Born into a devout Catholic home, she grew up and remained through her life a loyal child of the church. She never consciously diverted to a hair's breadth from the

[1] "Of late it has been the fashion to write her name Teresa or Teresia, without "h," not only in Spanish and Italian where the "h" could have no place, but also in French, German, and Latin, which ought to preserve the etymological spelling. As it is derived from a Greek name, Tharasia, the saintly wife of St. Paulinus of Nola, it should be written Theresia in German and Latin, and Thérèse in French." *Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 14, p. 516.

[2] Her full name was Doña Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada. In the monastery of the Incarnation she was known for twenty-eight years as Doña Teresa. When in 1563 she entered the Monastery of St. Joseph, of the Reform of the Carmelites, she took the name of Teresa of Jesus.

[3] *Autobiography,* chap. 1, 2, note 2.

[4] *Les Mystiques Espagnols,* p. 3, quoted by Inge, *Christian Mysticism,* Oxford, 1899, p. 213.

teachings of Rome or the directions of her superiors. She repeatedly avows her subservience to the dictates of authority. "I submit myself in everything to the teaching of the Holy Mother Church of Rome." [5] Even when there was a contradiction between the command of her Lord and the direction of her confessor, she obeyed the latter instead of the former. At such a time "our Lord Himself told me to obey my confessor. His Majesty afterwards would change the mind of the confessor, so that he would have me to do what he had forbidden before." [6]

The Reformation, also, gave direction to her life. One of her biographers significantly says that she was born in 1515 "when Luther was secreting the poison which he vomited out two years later." [7] In her mature years she traced the cause of the rise of Protestantism to the relaxation of discipline within the religious orders.[8] Thereupon she proceeded, in the face of bitter opposition, to reform the Order of the Carmelites by founding new convents in which the more rigorous discipline of the original rule of the Order was enforced. In this way she became a factor in the Counter-Reformation. She nurtured her aversion against "the Lutherans," including of course all Protestants, unto the day of her death. In the last paragraph of *The Interior Castle* she exhorts the reader, saying: "every time you read this book, to praise His Majesty exceedingly, and beg of Him to advance His Church, to enlighten the Lutherans, and to obtain the pardon of my sins."

Her parentage, her physical and mental traits, and her early training and adventures were formative factors in the religious life of her mature years. She came of noble ancestry. She describes her parents as "devout and God-

[5] *The Book of the Foundations,* Prologue, 6; also *Interior Castle,* pp. 24, 233; *Autobiography,* chap. 30, 14.
[6] *Autobiography,* chap. 26, 6; *Relation,* VII, 15.
[7] *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 9th edition, Vol. 23, p. 301.
[8] *Autobiography,* 7, 9.

fearing." Her father was "a man of great charity towards the poor and compassion for the sick and for servants." He was "very much given to the reading of good books" and "his life was most pure." Her mother was of delicate health, "possessing great beauty," though "never making any account of it." She was "singularly pure in all her ways." Her "carefulness to make us say our prayers and to bring us up devout to our Lady and to certain saints, began to make me think seriously when I was, I believe, six or seven years old." From her mother she seems to have inherited both a frail body and a highly susceptible imagination.[9]

Notwithstanding her prodigious labors,[10] her writing of books, founding of monasteries, and constant journeys, she was weighed down from youth on with grievous infirmities. "My bodily sufferings," she writes, "were unendurable. I have undergone most painful sufferings in this life, and, as the physicians say, the greatest that can be borne, such as the contraction of my sinews when I was paralyzed." [11] Again, "I have been suffering for twenty years from sickness every morning, so that I could not take any food till past midday." [12] She speaks of "fainting fits," "disease of the heart," [13] "noise and weakness in her head." [14]

Several instances in her childhood give evidence of her sensitive nature, vacillating mind, and innate religious disposition. Following the example of her mother and behind

[9] For the facts relating to parents and childhood, see *Autobiography,* chap 1.

[10] From 1561 to 1582 she founded directly or indirectly sixteen convents and fourteen monasteries, each of the Carmelite Order with rigorous discipline in distinction from the Carmelites with a mitigated rule. The former were known as Discalzos (Barefooted); the latter as Calzados (Sandaled).

[11] *Autobiography,* 32, 3.

[12] *Autobiography,* chap. 7, 18.

[13] *Autobiography,* chap. 4, 6.

[14] *Preface of Interior Castle.*

the back of her father, she became intensely interested in books on knight-errantry. To this reading she afterwards traced "the beginning of lukewarmness in my good desires and the occasion of my falling away in many respects."[15] Her father prudently diverted her attention from knights and turned it to martyrs. Impelled less by admiration for their heroism than by the belief that martyrs went to heaven without detention in purgatory, she, in collusion with her brother, ventured in search of a martyr's crown by running away from home to the land of the Moors. The children were foiled in their attempt by an uncle who met them near the gate of the city and returned them to their mother. But they continued to give vent to their childlike religious enthusiasm and anticipated the work of later years in building hermitages by piling up small stones scattered in her father's garden. "I used to delight exceedingly, when playing with other children in the building of monasteries as if we were nuns, and I think I wished to be a nun though not so much as I did to be a martyr or a hermit."[16] With all her religious inclinations, she was by no means insensible to the allurements of the world. She might have become a belle as well as a nun. This element in her nature needs to be remembered if we are to understand her vacillating life in the monastery. She seems to have been an attractive girl fitted to enter social life and to enjoy the world. She writes of herself: "Then growing up, I began to discover the natural gifts which our Lord had given me — they were said to be many; and when I should have given Him thanks for them I made use of every one of them to offend Him."[17] She was not averse to the vanities and flirtations of a pretty girl. "I began to make much of dress, to wish to please others by my appearance. I took pains with my hands and

[15] *Autobiography,* chap. 2, 1.
[16] *Autobiography,* chap. 1, 6.
[17] *Autobiography,* chap. 1, 8.

my hair, used perfumes and all vanities within my reach. . . . This fastidiousness of excessive neatness lasted some years." [18] Later, however, she assures us that she never permitted herself to be led astray by men; "nor if I had the power, would I have ever constrained any one to like me, for our Lord kept me from this." [19]

When St. Theresa was "about fourteen years old" [20] she came under the sinister influence of a "light" and "frivolous" relative who was often in the house. She was very fond of her company and found pleasure in her vanities. "The conversation of this person so changed me, that no trace was left of my soul's natural disposition to virtue and I became a reflection of her and of another who was given to the same kind of amusements." [21]

Both her father and her older sister were much distressed by her association with these persons. Partly to save her from her friends and partly to continue her education, the father placed her in an Augustinian monastery in the city. Here she remained about a year and a half, without a thought of becoming a nun. Yet she could not, impressionable as she always was, escape the influence especially of the good and holy conversations of one of the nuns—"a person of great discretion and sanctity." Later she wrote: "This good companionship began to root out the habits which bad companionship had formed, and to bring my thoughts back to the desire of eternal things, as well as to banish in some measure the great dislike I had to be a nun." [22]

Her residence in the monastery was cut short by "a serious illness." She was obliged to return to her father's house. She spent some time, also, in the home of a devout uncle.

[18] *Autobiography,* chap. 2, 2.
[19] *Autobiography,* chap. 5, 11.
[20] *Autobiography,* chap. 2, 4.
[21] *Autobiography,* chap. 2, 5.
[22] *Autobiography,* chap. 3, 1.

What she heard from him and read to him, helped her to come to a decision in life. "I came to understand the truth I had heard in my childhood that all things are as nothing, the world vanity, and passing rapidly away." [23] Thus she began a struggle with herself which lasted "three months" and ended in her resolve to become a nun. In this she was strengthened by reading the Epistles of Jerome.[24] Her father refused his consent when she made known her purpose. "The utmost I could get from him was that I might do as I pleased after his death." [25]

At the age of eighteen she left her home and became a novice in the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation. It was by no means an easy step for her to take. "I remember perfectly well," she writes, "and it is quite true, that the pain I felt when I left my father's house was so great that I do not believe the pain of dying will be greater,— for it seemed to me as if every bone in my body were wrenched asunder." [26]

## II

From the moment of her entrance into the monastery her inner struggle ceased and she felt happy. "I was filled with a joy so great that it has never failed me to this day." [27] She devoted herself ardently to the cultivation of saintliness, greatly helped by the perusal of a book given her by her uncle, entitled, *Tercer Abecadario* by Fray Francisco de Osuna, and treating of the prayer of recollection. The effect of this book upon her she describes as follows: "I was much pleased with the book, and resolved to follow the way of prayer, which it described, with all my might. And

[23] *Autobiography,* chap. 3, 6.
[24] *Autobiography,* chap. 3, 8.
[25] *Autobiography,* chap. 3, 9.
[26] *Autobiography,* chap. 4, 1.
[27] *Autobiography,* chap. 4, 2.

as our Lord had already bestowed upon me the gift of tears, and I had found pleasure in reading, I began to spend a certain time in solitude, to go frequently to confession, and make a beginning of that way of prayer, with this book for my guide." [28]

But now, again, after the time of her novitiate had expired, she became the victim of her vacillating nature. Her first zeal for holiness died down. She yielded to the more easy-going life of the other nuns who lived under the mitigated rule of the Carmelites. This allowed much freedom and condoned slackness in discipline. The sisters had free intercourse with the society of Avila, received and returned visits, and often absented themselves from the monastery for weeks and months at a time. St. Theresa was only too ready to accept these privileges though not without scruples of conscience. "On one side," she says, "God was calling me; on the other, I was following the world. All the things of God gave me great pleasure; and I was a prisoner to the things of the world." [29] She found no satisfaction in this wavering and inconstant mood. "I may say that it was the most painful life that can be imagined, because I had no sweetness in God and no pleasure in the world." [30]

After twenty years of "strife and contention which arose out of my attempt to reconcile God and the world," [31] she began a life of absolute surrender to God. This may be called her conversion, not indeed from the world to God, but from a life of compromise between the world and God, to a life of unconditional submission to God. She was fully conscious of the change. "Henceforth, it is another and a new book — I mean another and a new life. Hith-

[28] *Autobiography,* chap. 4, 8.
[29] *Autobiography,* chap. 7, 27.
[30] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 1.
[31] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 4.

erto my life was my own; my life, since I began to explain these methods of prayer, is the life which God lived in me,—so it seems to me." [32]

As she had ascribed her former life to her failure "to lean on the strong pillar of prayer," [33] so she found the secret of her later life in the resumption of prayer. "Prayer is the door to those great graces which our Lord bestowed upon me." [34] Of course she always prayed, but in a perfunctory and servile way. "The days that passed over without my spending a great part of them in prayer were few." [35] It was, however, only the ordinary customary vocal prayer neutralized by her worldly affections.[36]

After she had given herself wholly to God, "trusting in His Majesty" alone and "thoroughly distrusting" herself, she began a new way of prayer, which in distinction from "vocal" she calls "mental" prayer.[37] She defines it as "nothing else but being on terms of friendship with God, frequently conversing in secret with Him who, we know, loves us." Prayer now became for her spontaneous, irresistible, the joy of her life. "I understood perfectly well that what had happened was something supernatural, because at times I was unable to withstand it; to have it when I would was impossible." [38]

The beginning of her conversion, i. e., her advance from one stage of prayer to another, and the time when she began to mend her ways and "grow better," was an experience she had one day in the oratory.[39] She saw a picture of the wounded and suffering Christ. She was overcome by the

[32] *Autobiography,* chap. 23, 1.
[33] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 1.
[34] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 13.
[35] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 3.
[36] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 2.
[37] *Autobiography,* chap. 8, 5.
[38] *Autobiography,* chap. 23, 5.
[39] 1555, Bouix.

thought of what He had suffered for her and of the evil return she had made for those wounds. She threw herself on the ground weeping and imploring Him to strengthen her once for all so that she might never offend Him again.[40] By this prostration before the picture she made "greater progress" than ever before. "I have grown better ever since."

She was, also, inspired to new life by reading the *Confessions* of Augustine. "When I came to his conversion, and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it seemed to me nothing less than that our Lord had uttered it for me. I felt so in my heart. I remained for some time lost in tears, in great inward affliction and distress."[41] She now gave herself in a special way to prayer. "His Majesty began to give me most frequently the grace of the prayer of quiet and very often that of union."[42]

Her conversion, begun in her prostration before the picture of the suffering Savior in the oratory, was consummated one day when she was reciting the hymn *Veni Creator*. "I fell into a trance — so suddenly, that I was as it were carried out of myself." "This was the first time our Lord bestowed upon me the grace of ecstasy. I heard these words: I will not have thee converse with men but with angels."[43] After this she alludes to the suddenness of the changes in her life. "From that day forth [the time of the trance] I have had courage so great as to leave all things for God who in one moment was pleased to change His servant into another person."[44] "Our Lord raised me in four months to a greater height than I have reached in seventeen years."

[40] *Autobiography*, chap. 9, 1.
[41] *Autobiography*, chap. 9, 9.
[42] *Autobiography*, chap. 23, 2.
[43] *Autobiography*, chap. 24, 7.
[44] *Autobiography*, chap. 24, 8.

## III

The primary cause as well as effect of her new life was prayer — prayer of an extraordinary kind. Of this she had foretastes in her early days in the monastery. Before she was twenty years old she resolved to follow the prayer of recollection described in Francisco's *Abecedario*. She was then already raised "to the prayer of quiet and occasionally to that of union, though I understood not what either one or the other was." [45] What in her youth happened at long intervals now came frequently. The intermissions of worldliness and frivolity ceased and she now lived constantly in the power and the joy of prayer. "The joy and sweetness which I felt were so great, and very often beyond the power to avoid." Withal she felt herself growing "better and stronger." [46]

At first she was alarmed and perplexed by her spiritual experiences which were beyond her control. She feared that she was either self-deceived or deluded of the devil. She consulted a number of spiritual advisers. They differed in their judgment of her case. Two of them agreed that she was deceived by an evil spirit but urged her to ask advice of a certain father of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit assured her that she was clearly under the guidance of the Spirit of God. "He left me consoled and fortified." In obedience to his counsel she began to mortify her body, disciplining it "even unto blood." [47] Both to convince herself and her directors that she was not under diabolic influence, and to show others, also, the way of prayer, she wrote at the command of her spiritual advisers, an account of her life which is now known as her *Autobiography*.[48]

[45] *Autobiography*, chap. 4, 9.
[46] *Autobiography*, chap. 23, 2.
[47] *Autobiography*, chap. 24, 2.
[48] *Autobiography*, chap. 16, 10; 10, 17. Preface to the Life, XXXI; *Relation* VII, 8, footnote 2.

In this and later books she proved herself a master of "descriptive psychology." A recent author has pronounced her writings "the most complete and vivid description ever penned of the successive phenomena of the inner experiences of a saint.[49] She is classed with the foremost writers of Spanish prose. Though she repeatedly disclaims any 'learning,' her literary productions are proof of native intellectual and religious genius of the highest order."

## IV

The mysticism of St. Theresa consists in her life of prayer which she divides into four stages or degrees — the prayer of meditation, the prayer of quiet or recollection, the prayer of union, the prayer of rapture or ecstasy. These degrees correspond in the main to the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth mansions in *The Interior Castle.* The seventh mansion is a stage above the four degrees and symbolizes the marriage of the soul with God. Her prayer was attended by the phenomena which are common in mystics in all ages and lands such as insensibility, ecstasy, rapture, vision, locutions, levitations, and flight of the spirit. Of these we shall say more later on.

The degrees of prayer are not based upon the quantity or quality of revelation but upon the psychological effects of the revelation upon the body and soul of the saint. Nor do the degrees always indicate progressive stages in the way of spiritual and moral perfection. They are merely varieties of psychological experiences without relative superiority of one over the other.[50]

Two forms of spiritual experience underlie the four de-

[49] Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Art. Mysticism, p. 98.

[50] "All this tends to show that it is safest to regard St. Theresa's original four degrees as psychological varieties which are not always successive stages nor always signs of definite degrees of perfection." Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* IX, p. 99.

grees of prayer. The first is the result of human effort — thought, meditation, diligence, and "comes with a noise." The second is a gift freely bestowed of the Lord at His pleasure without any effort on man's part. We cannot tell whence and how it comes. She explains these experiences and their mode of operation by an illustration taken from flowing water, her favorite comparison "for explaining spiritual subjects." [51]

The first experience is like a cistern filled with water led through pipes from a spring at a distance. It may be skillfully done but the water none the less flows with certain amount of noise and in spurts. The second experience is like a cistern that is filled by a spring at the bottom, the water running slowly and quietly to the top and overflowing, without effort on the part of any one. Pipes are needless and the water never fails. The source is God and the power by which it flows is God.[52]

In the former experience man is active in meditation, recollection, and resolute fixing of the mind upon God. Divine blessings are conditioned by man's diligence. In the latter experience man is passive and receptive; God apprehends him when and where and how He wills. It is of His great mercy that we receive His revelations and consolations. This reminds one of Luther's experience of the sufficiency of divine grace alone.

In the *Autobiography* [53] the figure of water is used in a different way to illustrate the nature of the four degrees of prayer. There are four ways of watering a garden: first, by drawing water out of a well "which is very laborious"; second, by raising water out of the well with the aid of "engine and bucket drawn by a windless. It is a less troublesome way than the first and gives more water"; third, by a

[51] *Interior Castle,* p. 81.
[52] *Interior Castle,* pp. 81, 82.
[53] I, II, III.

stream or a brook, whereby the garden is watered in a much better way—"for the soil is more thoroughly saturated, and there is no necessity to water it so often, and the labor of the gardener is much less"; fourth, by a shower of rain, "when our Lord Himself waters it without labor on our part, and this way is incomparably better than all the others of which I have spoken."

These four ways of watering a garden, which symbolizes the soul, represent varying degrees of man's activity in the attainment of God's blessings. From one degree to the other man becomes more and more inactive until in the fourth the work is done wholly by God.

Let us now consider the characteristics of the four degrees of prayer.

1. The Prayer of Meditation. This is the stage of "beginners in prayer."[54] "They are those who draw the water up out of the well." One must separate himself from the distractions of the world that come through seeing and hearing. He must fix his attention on God and dwell in solitude. St. Theresa speaks of beginners "practising the presence of God." By this is meant the direction of acts of love to His Sacred Humanity, and remaining in His presence continually, speaking to Him, praying to Him in necessities and complaining to Him in troubles, being merry with Him in joys and not forgetting Him because of joys. All this one may do without set prayers, but rather with words, befitting our desires and needs.[55]

There will be seasons of aridity, when we seek to draw water from the well and find it empty. God will send torments and permit temptations to try those who love Him. There will be times when we are not able to engage in prayer. Then we should turn to "exterior works of charity and spiritual reading." Even these the soul cannot always do.

[54] *Autobiography,* chap. 11, 13.
[55] *Autobiography,* chap. 12, 3.

The body should be properly cared for by recreations — "holy ones, such as conversation or going out into the fields." [56]

Notwithstanding these obstacles and apparent failures, which God permits for a good purpose, beginners are to persist in their efforts toward holiness. "We must renew our strength to serve Him, and strive not to be ungrateful because it is on this condition that our Lord dispenses His treasures." [57]

2. The Prayer of Quiet or Recollection.[58] This is like the drawing of water out of the well with the aid of a windlass and bucket with less labor than in the first degree and with intervals of rest and quiet. "The soul is now touching on the supernatural — for it never could by any efforts attain to this." The will is wholly in unison with God's will. Without knowing it, it "consents to become a prisoner of God." The other faculties, the understanding and the memory, may help the will and "render it capable of the fruition of so great a good." They may, however, become distracted and "hinder the will very much." [59]

The consolations of God come with but slight labor; and prayer, even if persisted in for a long time, is never wearisome. The tears which flow are tears of joy and are not the result of any effort of our own. The virtues thrive much more "beyond all comparison, than they did in the previous state of prayer." [60] Once the soul has reached this stage, it begins to lose the desire of earthly things, for it sees clearly that there are no earthly riches that can for a moment be compared with the things of the Spirit.

The soul, also, has a sense of the nearness of God. So

[56] *Autobiography,* chap. 11, 24.
[57] *Autobiography,* chap. 10, 8.
[58] *Autobiography,* chap. 14.
[59] *Autobiography,* chap. 14, 4.
[60] *Autobiography,* chap. 14, 6.

near is He " that messengers need not be sent to Him," but one may speak to Him directly; " and not with a loud crying, because so near is He already, that He understands even the movement of its lips." [61] In this stage, however, man is not yet wholly passive, though far less active than in the first stage. The power of God works in greater measure and with less resistance and more voluntary coöperation on the part of man.

3. The Prayer of Union. This is like the watering of a garden by a flowing river or brook; the water needs not be drawn, only directed.[62] The Lord takes upon Himself " the work of the gardener refusing to let the soul undergo any labor whatever." It takes its ease, consenting to the grace of God. The soul has completely abandoned itself to God. While the will is abiding in peaceful union, " the understanding and memory are so free that they can be employed in affairs and be occupied in works of charity." [63] In the prayer of quiet, the second degree, the soul which would willingly neither stir nor move, is delighting in the holy repose of Mary; but in this prayer, the prayer of union, the soul can be like Martha also. Thus it may live the active and contemplative life at once, and be able to attend to deeds of mercy and the affairs of its state and to spiritual reading.[64] What the soul has tried to bring about by fatiguing the understanding for twenty years and failed, God accomplishes in an instant. The virtues, also, are now stronger than ever before. The pleasure and sweetness are incomparably greater than in the former state. St. Theresa uses terms like the following to express her sense of delight: " beside myself," " drunk with love," " heavenly madness." [65]

[61] *Autobiography,* chap. 14, 7.
[62] *Autobiography,* chap. 16.
[63] *Autobiography,* chap. 17, 5.
[64] *Autobiography,* chap. 17, 6. *Relations,* VIII, 6.
[65] *Autobiography,* chap. 16, 3, 8.

4. The Prayer of Rapture or Ecstasy.[66] In this state, which rarely lasts more than a half hour, body and soul are passive. How the ecstasy is effected the Saint cannot tell. It is the experience of Paul (II Cor. 12: 2–3) who knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. The soul is wholly insensible to its surroundings. There is " only fruition, without understanding what that is the fruition of which is granted," though " it is understood that the fruition is of a certain good containing in itself all good together at once." " The senses are so occupied that not one of them is at liberty, so as to be able to attend to anything else, whether outward or inward." Body and soul feel themselves penetrated with a sweet holy pain as of the most fearful heat or of the highest degree of weakness or of a sense of choking. Yet, withal, there is a powerful uplift of the spirit which gives the body an ethereal feeling. The soul, however, even if it wished, cannot make known its feelings.

After one recovers from the ecstasy, there remains " an exceedingly great tenderness " in the soul. It is possessed " of so much courage, that if it were now hewn in pieces for God, it would be a great consolation to it." This is the time " of heroic determinations, of the living energy of good desires, of the beginning of hatred of the world, and of the most clear perceptions of its vanity." [67]

In *The Interior Castle,* written fifteen years after the *Autobiography,* St. Theresa describes a state higher than that of the fourth degree of prayer. The beginning of it was a vision of the Most Sacred Humanity. He appeared to her, after she had communicated, in " a figure of great splendor just as He was after His resurrection." He said to her: " Now was the time she should consider His affairs as hers and that He would take care of hers." This was the consummation of the " spiritual nuptials." " As great is

[66] *Autobiography,* chap. 18.
[67] *Autobiography,* chap. 19, 2.

the difference between the spiritual espousals and the spiritual marriage as there is between those who are affianced and those who are really united in matrimony." [68]

The effect of this union is felt in the body and the soul. "The body is no more remembered than if the soul were out of it." [69] The Lord appears in the center of the soul and is seen not by the bodily eye but by intellectual vision. Thus He appeared to the apostles, without entering in at the door,[70] when He said to them: *"Pax vobis."* Even the persons of the Holy Trinity discovered themselves to her. God and the soul can now no more be separated; they blend as water from heaven flowing into a river or spring.

Three effects are clearly marked: 1. Forgetfulness of self, so that one truly seems no longer to exist; 2. A great desire for suffering and joy in persecution; 3: Desire to serve Him and to benefit some soul; the cessation of all raptures, except at rare intervals. There are no more ecstasies or flights of the spirit.[71]

In this state St. Theresa discovered that the psychological effects, which had reached their culmination in ecstasy, ceased or at least greatly diminished; and that she could experience even higher communications than before without any suspension of the bodily faculties; nay more, that the peace of "quiet" or "union" was no longer needed, for she could be conscious of mystical light and of the Trinity,[72] while giving her mind fully to necessary occupations.[73]

Her sane and practical view of the religious life is summarized when she said: "Believe me, Martha and Mary

[68] *Interior Castle,* p. 210.
[69] *Interior Castle,* p. 211.
[70] *Interior Castle,* p. 211.
[71] *Interior Castle,* pp. 217–221.
[72] "The imaginary visions have ceased but the intellectual vision of the Three Persons and the Sacred Humanity seems ever present, and that, I believe is a vision of a much higher kind." *Revelation* XI, 3.
[73] Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* IX, p. 98.

must go together in entertaining our Lord and in order to have Him always with us, we must treat Him well and provide food for Him," and " His food is that we should strive in every possible way that souls may be saved, and may praise Him." [74]

## V

Her prayer was accompanied by strange and varied mystical phenomena. Of these she speaks in the *Autobiography* and especially in the *Relations of Her Spiritual State.* She had her first rapture when she was repeating the *Veni Creator* in the oratory.[75] " I fell into a trance so suddenly that I was, as it were, carried out of myself." In that condition breathing and all bodily strength failed. The hands could not be moved without great pain. The eyes closed involuntarily, and if they opened they saw nothing. The ears heard, but what was heard could not be comprehended. It was useless to speak because it was not possible to conceive a word.[76] Different names are given to the same experience. Rapture, transport, flight of the spirit, and trance she considered the same thing as ecstasy.[77]

She had numerous visions, bright and dark. She beheld Jesus frequently, both beside her and within her, the Holy Trinity, the Mother of God descending from heaven, a soul in a state of grace, truth itself and how all things are in God. At one time she saw hell and the horrors of a lost soul. The devil and his emissaries appeared in frightful forms to disturb her devotions.

Occasionally things heavenly appeared in a gross and almost repulsive way. One day while at prayer Jesus showed her His hands of indescribable beauty, afterwards His face, and

[74] *The Interior Castle,* p. 229.
[75] *Autobiography,* chap. 24, 6, 7.
[76] *Autobiography,* chap. 18, 14.
[77] *Autobiography,* chap. 18, 14.

finally His Most Sacred Humanity. At another time He placed a ring, with a stone set in it like amethyst, upon her finger.[78] Again, an angel appeared to her with a golden dart tipped with fire which he thrust into her bowels, drawing them out after it. This was followed by the feeling of a sweet agony of love to God. Once when she was partaking of the Holy Communion the host in her mouth dripped with blood and her whole face and body seemed to be covered with it.[79] Instances of a similar kind could be multiplied, but those mentioned suffice to indicate the character of her experiences.

She repeatedly emphasizes the fact that what she saw and heard came not through the eye and ear of the body. They were interior voices and visions.[80] At times, however, if we may judge by her descriptions, the interior experiences came close to external realities. "It is the essence of mysticism," says Vaughan, "to confound an internal creation or process with some external manifestation." [81]

The saving feature in St. Theresa was that she did not overestimate the value of visions and locutions. "I know well that holiness does not lie herein" [82] [in raptures, revelations, and visions]. They may be necessary for beginners and "for poor women, such as I am, weak and infirm of purpose." But she expresses her "disgust" for servants of God who are men of weight, learning and sense, and yet make much account of God giving them sweetness in devotion.[83] "They ought to understand that they have no need of it and be masters of themselves when they have it not." True union with God, which she so much desired, she did not await through raptures. They may indicate union if, when

[78] *Relations* IX, 25.
[79] *Relations* IV, 5.
[80] *Relations* VIII.
[81] *Hours With the Mystics,* London, 1880, Vol. 2, p. 57.
[82] *Book of Foundations,* chap. 4, § 8.
[83] *Autobiography,* chap. 11, 21.

they are over, they are followed by obedience; "but if, after raptures there ensues but scanty obedience, and self-will remains, this latter as it seems to me, will be joined to self-love and not to the will of God." [84] In this respect she agreed with the masters of the spiritual life in all ages. They, as a rule, attach little importance to visions or at best they appeared to them only as aids to faith. St. Bonaventura said of them: "They neither make nor show one holy; else Balaam would have been holy; and the ass which saw an angel." [85] It would not be true, however, to the facts of experience to deny all value to visions. Professor James says: "The great Spanish mystics, who carried the habit of ecstasy as far as it has often been carried, appear for the most part to have shown indomitable spirit and energy, and all the more so for the trances in which they indulged." [86]

## VI

The difficult question, how to account for the mystical experiences of St. Theresa, remains to be considered. They may be explained in several ways,— as a delusion of an evil spirit, as self-deception or hallucination, as pious fraud, an attempt to deceive others but with good intentions, as a direct work of God, as the result of pathological conditions, disordered nerves, "suggested and imitated hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstitution or a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria." [87]

Two of her contemporaries, Juan De Avila and Fra Domingo Bañes, wrote cautious and discriminating reviews of her *Autobiography*. They were convinced that "she is not

[84] *Book of Foundations,* chap. V, § 14.

[85] "Nec facunt sanctum nec ostendunt; alioquin Balaam sanctus esset; et asina quae vidit angelum."

[86] *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* N. Y. and London, 1903, p. 418.

[87] *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* N. Y. and London, 1903, p. 413.

a deceiver." They were slow to accept the reality of locutions and visions and admonished men not to seek them. Yet, at the same time, they admit that God has granted such blessings to saints in the past and that one must distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit. Both conclude that, in view of her goodness, her truthfulness, her obedience, mortification, patience and charity toward her persecutors, the visions and revelations of St. Theresa are to be accepted as having come from God.

In our age, when we are wont to account for phenomena through the forces of heredity and environment, i. e., historically and psychologically, none of the theories above named satisfies us. Direct action of God, delusion of Satan, self-deception, shattered nerves do not adequately explain all the effects which were wrought in her life. We shall have to interpret these in the light of tradition, surroundings, and personal characteristics.

Religion in its earliest form was the outcome of man's reaction toward the universe as a whole. There were two factors in religion, the objective and the subjective, later called the divine and the human. Reduced to their lowest terms they may be described as mystery and emotion. Man felt impelled to express the emotion and to define the mystery in such language as he could command. He had to speak in parables and his earliest social relations furnished symbols for the interpretation of his religious experience. The great unknown Prophet cried: "To whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?"[88] To find words to fit facts, phrases that made clear his "blank misgivings" and "obstinate questionings"— that was the task of evolving man.

With the rise and spread of literature the language of religion became a fixed tradition, and the sons were prone to voice their faith, the substance of mystery and emotion, in

[88] Isaiah 40:18.

the words of the fathers. Oral and written tradition became an additional factor in the formation of religious thought and life. The prophet was followed by the priest and the scribe. True, men as always felt the impact of the universe and responded to it, but they no longer explained the mystery or voiced the emotion in their own original way but cast them into prescribed formulas and rituals. This naturally resulted in different religions among different nations, and in variations in type of the same religion. The adherents propagated their beliefs and practices by word and deed, line upon line and precept upon precept, in ways of their own.

In Christianity there are two main types — the Catholic and the Evangelical. Each of these has its varieties with distinctive doctrines, cultus, polity, and piety. In Catholicism we need but mention the Greek and Roman forms. In each form there are definite tendencies, schools, orders — the laymen and the clergy, the secular and the regular, the dogmatist, the ritualist and the mystic, differences due to heredity, racial and individual genius, religious leadership, degrees of culture, and environment. The varieties of the same species are naturally transmitted by spoken and written word, by individual and corporate action, from one generation to the other. Men, accordingly, by reason of birth, blood, caste, personal predisposition come under the power of one or the other species of Catholicism or Protestanism. In speech spoken or written, in act public or private, they are usually limited by lines laid for them by the founders and the fathers of their group.

One can readily trace the mystics extending from apostles to counter-reformers. They were a class by themselves within Catholicism, and they have their kith and kin in each century. With all their differences, they have certain things in common which enable us to put them in the same group. They speak the same language, have the same experiences, follow the same methods, and seek the same end. Professor

James cites four marks of the mystical conscious state,—ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, passivity. Professor Inge considers the following four traits essential to mysticism, —1. the soul as well as the body can see or perceive; 2. to know God, we must be akin to God; 3. without holiness we cannot see God; 4. our guide in the upward path is love. The *scala perfectionis* was generally divided into three stages. The first is called the purgative life; the second the illuminative, while the third is the goal rather than a part of the journey and is called the unitive life.[89] All of them methodically cultivated the mood by which they hoped to attain the experimental union of the individual with God.[90] All recognize stages or degrees in the path that leads Godward. In the dhyâna of the Buddhist there are "Four stages" and beyond these three higher degrees. The numbers at once suggest the four degrees of prayer and the seven mansions of St. Theresa. All of them seek God in the inner life and are never satisfied until they have pierced through all that is not God and have penetrated to God Himself. As a rule they are pantheists and optimists, though the use of these philosophic terms would be strange to them. "In the mystic state we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed." [91]

Against this background of historical religion we must view the life and mysticism of St. Theresa. She was the heir of Catholic traditions and of an ascetic and mystic type of piety. These prevailed in Spain, in the city and home into which she was born, in her uncle's house and in the monastic school in which she was educated. From childhood she read books on

[89] Inge, *Christian Mysticism,* Oxford, 1899, p. 9.

[90] Ecclesiastical tradition held that the practice of continual aspiration is the best means of attaining pure prayer and "union with God without any medium."

[91] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* p. 419.

martyrs and saints, most, if not all of whom, were mystics.

She was predisposed by nature to a distinctively religious life, though she was not without affections for the vanities of the world. Under the instructions of her mother she began "to think seriously when she was six or seven years old." As a child she longed for a martyr's crown, built hermitages at play, "wished to be a nun but more to be a hermit." At eighteen, under the influence of a prudent and devout nun, she turned her mind to "eternal things" and read with avidity the religious books of her uncle. The habit of reading she continued through life, and commends it to those who desire to advance in the way of perfection. She came into close personal fellowship with the great ascetic and mystic, Peter of Alcantara, whose manner of life she describes graphically in her *Autobiography*.

By conscious effort she tried to attain certain forms of prayer, especially that which was treated in Francisco's *Tercer Abecadario*. When she was but twenty "she spent much time in solitude," made a beginning in the prayer of recollection; and the Lord gave her "the gift of tears." Then already she was raised "to the prayer of quiet and occasionally to that of union," though "I understood not what either one or the other was." [92]

She had a frail body and a highly sensitive soul, physical and mental traits which made her receptive to all kinds of religious stimuli. In her vain attempt for twenty years "to reconcile God and the world," she reached a crisis, a point of final decision, when through a deep inward struggle, supported by pictures, books and prayers, she completely renounced the world and gave herself wholly to God. The new religious experience found expression in visions, locutions, raptures, and tears of sweetness and joy.

She, also, had a way of "practicing the presence of God" by deliberate effort. "I used to labor to picture our Lord's

[92] *Autobiography*, chap. 4, 9.

Humanity and I never could." But in time the effort was crowned by vision. She "contrived to picture Christ as within me." On such occasions "a feeling of the presence of God would come over me unexpectedly, so that I could no more doubt either that He was within me and that I was wholly absorbed in Him." She concentrated her attention on "the prayer in the garden." This she did "for years, nearly every night before she fell asleep."

The eager desire for communion with God, the persistent effort to reach Him, the condition of body and soul, the mystical and ascetic traditions to which she was heir through books, institutions, and living men and women, her native genius which is inexplicable — these furnish sufficient ground for her unique religious life. While she "differed greatly from other mystics in her estimates of the various facts and is the starting-point of a new tradition," *her originality is not due to the revelations she received or to the emotions she felt, but to the unparalelled mastery of the art of describing her religious states.* The gift of analysis and clear statement made her the founder of a new school of mysticism which is in high favor in the Catholic Church to this day.

The visualizing of the fleeting images of a highly stimulated fancy and the materializing of the figures which tramp across the field of consciousness in the day dreams of a devout saint, are to be expected in a church and a land where pictures of Christ, the virgin, and the saints, angels and demons, confront the plastic mind of the child on canvas and in marble, on parchment and in ritual. Excitable natures, subject to nervous instability and bodily infirmities, naturally express their religious emotions in such tangible forms. This is done spontaneously and in sincerity, without thought of deception. It is a psychic process controlled by certain conditions and when these meet, the result follows as by necessity. It has value only for him who experiences

it, and then only as it promotes the life of faith and love. *It is a mark, not so much of a high type, as of a unique kind, of saintliness.*

Professor Hermann, in *The Communion of the Christian with God,* after discussing mysticism in general, asks whether or not, it seeks God as a Christian ought to seek Him? whether the God whom the mystics believe they find is the living God of our faith? He answers in the negative. One must put the mysticism of St. Theresa to this test. She, like all her kind, put aside "everything which affects us from without,"— nature, history, cultus, doctrine, even the historical Christ. All these are simply means to an end, at most useful only to produce the frame of mind in which God comes inwardly near us. St. Theresa soared above and left behind the faculties of the soul, the Scriptures, the record of Jesus, and came into immediate and rapturous contact with God, the Holy Trinity, the Divine Humanity, angels and demons. However admirable her life may have been, beneficent her deeds, and sane and sound her counsels, her way of perfection is no longer in harmony with the highest spiritual and ethical views of life or with the ideals of evangelical piety. Men now do not seek God by mystic vision, dogmatic tradition, or the way of ratiocination. There is a more excellent and a less spectacular way, the way of faith working in love. When the will conforms to the purposes of a Christ-like God, men will see Him as He is, see Him always not apart from nature, history, the historical Jesus and the church, but in these and through these; see Him not in tangible and visible forms but feel His presence in life that is active in works of faith, labors of love, and is sustained by the patience of hope.

The mysticism of St. Theresa belongs to an age and a mood that are vitally related to a view of the world and of life which men to-day can no longer hold. They are not a spontaneous product of the modern spirit. They

belong to the mediæval order. The modern man is not less religious and perchance equally mystical, but he seeks access to God in other ways and voices his religious experiences in other words than those used by St. Theresa.

In the preparation of this chapter the writer used the following books of St. Theresa in English translation:

*St. Teresa of Jesus, embracing the Life, Relations, Maxims and Foundations Written by the Saint,* edited by John J. Burke, C.S.P., the Columbia Press, New York, 1911.

*The Interior Castle of the Mansions,* translated by the Rev. John Dalton, John J. McVey, Philadelphia, 1893.

*The Book of the Foundations of S. Teresa of Jesus,* translated from the Spanish by David Lewis, Benziger Bros., New York.

# THE MYSTICISM OF GEORGE FOX

RUFUS M. JONES

George Fox was born in 1624, the same year that Jacob Boehme, the great Silesian mystic, died. Fox had no interest in the theosophical alchemical interpretations of the universe which were so dear to Boehme, but in almost every other way these two Protestant mystics were kindred. They were both unlearned men — the peasant type and not the scholar type. They both were born and brought up in narrow rural, provincial surroundings, having almost no contact with the great currents of business and thought. They both kept sheep and they both learned the shoemaker's trade. They reveal the same general psychological traits of personality. They were both shy, retiring, introspective, conscientious, morbidly inclined boys. They naturally withdrew from games and sports; they shunned fellowship; they were solitary and meditative. They lived in companionship with the Bible and found their real world in the unseen rather than in the seen. They were both of unstable psychical disposition — the type that hears voices and sees sights which are not there for other people. They were both acutely sensitive to suggestion. Certain ideas burst into their consciousness with explosive force, and, as they could not trace them to any external source in the world of men, they were convinced that these ideas were "communicated" to them. They both passed through a momentous crisis-experience which inaugurated a new era for their lives, from which event they began to interpret to the world the revelation which they had received. Of course they both suffered from

pitiless persecution, since that was a feature of life which any prophet anywhere at that stage of history was bound to undergo.

Even more striking is the parallelism in their fundamental interpretation of Christianity. They both radically revolted from the dominant theology of the Reformation — in one case the Lutheran and in the other case the Calvinistic. They felt about these vast theological systems as the great Hebrew prophets felt about sacrifice, or as St. Paul felt about the "law," or as Luther felt about "works," or as the Puritans felt about illicit survivals of superstition. They looked upon them as "substitutes" for real Christianity — "mental idols," Boehme calls them. These systems seemed to both these mystics ways of securing "salvation" without the necessity of going through any spiritual *process,* without real change of nature and transformation of life. Salvation for them both was first and always a vital *process.* "A Christian," Boehme says, "is a new creature in the ground of the heart;" [1] "The Kingdom of God is not from without, but it is a new man, who lives in love, in patience, in hope, in faith, and in the cross of Jesus Christ." Fox, in the same general vein and in his vivid style says, "As I was walking in Mansfield, the Lord said unto me, That which people trample upon must be thy food. And as the Lord spoke, He opened it to me that people trampled upon the life, even the life of Christ; they fed upon words and fed one another with words; but they trampled upon the life; trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God, which blood was my life, and lived in their airy notions, talking of Him." [2]

They both thought of Christ primarily as an inward revelation. They did not spiritualize the historical facts

[1] *Mysterium Magnum,* LXX, 40 *Fourth Epistle.*

[2] Journal, I, p. 20. Compare Isaiah's phrase "Tramping the Temple."

of the gospel nor minimize the importance of the incarnation. But they refused to consider that Christ came, in his historical manifestation, to found a Church or to inaugurate a scheme of salvation or to furnish men with a magical theological doctrine. He was then, and always is, a revelation of God. He can no more be turned into an institution or a scheme or a system, than poetry can be turned into a theory of poetry, or than music can be turned into a mathematical system of acoustics, or than love can be caught and turned over into a chapter of psychology. Christ is for them both a living reality, a vital fact, a real presence. The reality, the fact, the presence must no doubt be interpreted in the light of the gospel, in terms of the incarnation, but nothing must be a substitute for *Him,* here and now. No verbal form, constructed by "opinion-peddlers," no system which the modern "Babel-builders" have erected in the hope of reaching heaven, no "letter-scheme," formulated by "titular Christians," must be allowed to deprive us of the unspeakable privilege of direct and immediate relation with Christ, who is here now as surely as He was in Galilee when Peter and John found Him. The Christ who was born of Mary must be born anew in our hearts, is their persistent message. "This birth," Boehme says, must be wrought within the person himself. "The Son of God must arise in the birth of your life, and then you are in Christ and He is in you, and all that He and the Father have is yours." [3] "They were discoursing of the blood of Christ," Fox says of "professors" at Mansfield, "and as they were discoursing of it, I saw through the immediate opening (or revelation) of the Invisible Spirit, the blood of Christ. And I cried out among them, and said, 'Do ye not see the blood of Christ. See it in your hearts, to sprinkle your hearts and consciences from dead works to serve the living God.' For I saw it, the blood of the New

[3] Boehme's *Three Principles* IV, 9.

Covenant, how it came into the heart." [4] This inward experience, this inmost birth, this reliving of Christ — "going through Christ's whole journey and entering wholly into His process" as Boehme puts it — is absolutely essential to the Christianity of both these prophets of the common people.

They both represent a peculiar branch of the Reformation movement. They are not an outcome positively or negatively of Lutheranism or Calvinism. They are both vigorous interpreters and prophets of another type of Christianity which is not a product developed from the main current of the Reformation. Their spiritual ancestors are to be found among the martyrs and lonely messengers of a new way, who were contemporaries of Luther and Calvin, who were convinced that a more radical Reformation was needed, whose sympathies were with the people rather than with the rulers or the nobility, who thought of religion primarily as experience and not as doctrine, who were tired of ecclesiasticism and wanted to bring men to the living Christ, who were determined not to patch up and revamp the old Church but instead to restore and revive primitive, apostolic Christianity. The most striking and influential figures in this group were Hans Denck (1495–1527) of Bavaria, a humanist, a mystic, an eager reformer, a friend of the people; Sebastian Franck (1499–1542) of Schwabia, also a humanist, a mystic, a historian, a radical reformer; Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489–1561) of Silesia, one of the first scholars of his time, a spiritual prophet of high order, a man dedicated to the task of restoring apostolic Christianity; Sebastian Castellio (1515–1563) of Switzerland, though born in France, a humanist, a co-laborer of Calvin's and later an opponent, a great defender of spiritual freedom, a tragic sufferer for truth, a forceful interpreter of Christianity as a way of life. These men and their fellow-laborers and successors and the little groups of seekers which

[4] *Journal,* I, p. 24.

were formed under their guidance or under the influence of their little books, supplied the main ideas that are found in the interpretation of Christianity as given both by Boehme and Fox.

Jacob Boehme diligently read and pondered the writings of Theophrastus Paracelsus and Valentine Weigel. Through them he was led to believe that the secret of the universe, the mystery of darkness and evil and the way of light and life might be found within the soul of man by the aid of a mighty divine illumination. In the year 1600 such an illumination burst in as a "flash" upon the soul of Boehme. His eye fell by chance upon the surface of a polished pewter dish which reflected the bright sunlight, when suddenly he felt himself environed and penetrated by the Light of God, and admitted into the innermost ground and center of the universe. His experience, instead of waning as he came back to normal consciousness, on the contrary deepened. He went to the public green in Görlitz, near his house, and there it seemed to him that he could see into the very heart and secret of Nature, and that he could behold the innermost properties of things. In his own account of his experience, Boehme plainly indicates that he had been going through a long and earnest travail of soul as a Seeker, "striving to find the heart of Jesus Christ and to be freed and delivered from everything that turned him away from Christ." At last, he says, he resolved to "put his life to the utmost hazard" rather than miss his life-quest, when suddenly the "gate was opened." He continues his account as follows: "In one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together in a University. . . . I saw and knew the Being of Beings, the Byss and Abyss, the eternal generation of the Trinity, the origin and descent of this world, and of all creatures through Divine Wisdom. I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds — 1) the

Divine, Angelical, or Paradisaical World; 2) the dark world, the origin of fire; and 3) the external, visible world as an out-breathing or expression of the internal and spiritual worlds. I saw, too, the essential nature of evil and of good, and how the pregnant Mother — the eternal genetrix — brought them forth."

He has also vividly told his experience in the *Aurora:* "While I was in affliction and trouble, I elevated my spirit, and earnestly raised it up unto God, as with a great stress and onset lifting up my whole heart and mind and will and resolution to wrestle with the love and mercy of God and not to give over unless He blessed me — then the Spirit did break through. When in my resolved zeal I made such an assault, storm, and onset upon God as if I had more reserves of virtue and power ready, with a resolution to hazard my life upon it, suddenly my spirit did break through the Gate, not without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and I reached the innermost Birth of the Deity and there I was embraced with love as a bridegroom embraces his bride. My triumphing can be compared to nothing, but the experience in which life is generated in the midst of death or like the resurrection from the dead. In this Light my spirit suddenly saw through all; and in all created things, even in herbs and grass, I knew God — who He is, how He is, and what His will is — and suddenly in that Light my will was set upon by a mighty impulse to describe the being of God."

Other experiences of a similar type came to him at later periods. He became a voluminous writer, often writing under what seemed to him immediate guidance, and expounding through his books — in spite of his barbaric terminology and his tedious repetitions — a truly marvelous way of life, one of the most marvelous that any unlearned man in the Protestant era has given. His books were all trans-

lated into English by his admirers between the years 1646 and 1661. They profoundly influenced John Milton,[5] Sir Isaac Newton, and, at a later date, William Law, but their most important influence is to be found in the popular religious movement of the commonwealth period (1640–1660). The ideas and spiritual aims which worked like leaven in the groups and mystical societies in that dynamic epoch do not by any means all emerge from Boehme. They came to England from the continent by many devious routes and over many strange bridges, but they were unmistakably set into motion by the men and the groups to whom I have referred, and Boehme was probably, through his translations, the most effective single force.

Nobody before 1648 had succeeded in organizing any large society of persons to express, interpret and propagate these ideas of the spiritual reformers. The anabaptists who represented one branch of the movement had been numerous in many parts of Europe, but they had been more or less fluid and chaotic. They exhibited a tendency rather than an organization. They had been of many types and varieties. Groups of them gathered around individual leaders who had their own peculiar traits and teachings. They did not and could not mass their forces. In any case, they were pitilessly martyred and in many parts of the world annihilated, though the movement eventually became the parent of powerful and impressive modern churches. The Schwenckfelders formed a small society of devoted followers of the Silesian reformer. In Holland and England there were large numbers of Seekers more or less grouped in semi-organized societies, called in Holland "Collegiants." The Friends, or Quakers, are however the first people to form a large and successful society of the distinct type which the mystics and spiritual reformers of the preceding one hundred years

[5] See Margaret L. Bailey's *Milton and Jacob Boehme*. American Branch of the Oxford Press, New York, 1914.

hoped for and worked for. This Society owed its existence primarily to George Fox (1624–1691), who is the best known and the most successful of the long line of spiritual reformers of this common group.

He was an intensely moral and religious youth—"I had," he says, "a gravity and stayedness of mind and spirit not usual in children."[6] "Boys and rude people" laughed at him, but "people generally" had respect for his "innocency and honesty." William Penn says of him in his youth: "From a child he appeared of another frame of mind than the rest of his brethren."[7] He was evidently pure-minded as a boy and not oppressed by a sense of his own sin —"When I was eleven years of age," he says, "I knew pureness and righteousness."[8] When he was nineteen, a profound change came over him. He became weighed down and oppressed under a tremendous sense of wickedness in the world and an almost overwhelming conviction that Christians "professed" something which they did not in reality *possess*. This disturbing discovery swept over Fox at a definite moment and was occasioned by a peculiar circumstance, but the trivial incident merely served as a focus-point to bring into consciousness deep-lying processes which had been for some time dimly present in him.[9] "I did not go to bed that night, nor could I sleep, but sometimes walked up and down and sometimes prayed and cried unto the Lord." The entire ground of disturbance is not his own sin, as was the case with Bunyan, but the vanity and insincerity of life, the large degree of sham, in the world around him, and he heard, as though through an audition, the command, "Thou must forsake all, both young and old, and keep out of all and be as a stranger unto all." Therefore

[6] *Journal* I, p. 2.
[7] *Journal* I, Preface p. xliv.
[8] *Journal* I, p. 3.
[9] *Journal* I, p. 3.

he broke off all normal fellowship with society, closed up his business occupation and started out as a lonely wanderer across the world. Wherever he heard of anybody who was likely to be of spiritual help to him, he visited him, but all helpers failed him. They proved to be "miserable comforters," "empty hollow casks," "broken cisterns," "professors without possession," and one and all unable, in his own words, "to speak to my condition." The poor youth was evidently in a pitiable state of depression. He describes himself as in "great sorrow and troubles," walking alone many nights, drifting along from town to town, often tempted to despair utterly, finding the so-called religious guides "all dark and under the chain of darkness." His physical condition was ominous and his own account reveals plain evidences of abnormal nervous disturbance. An attempt was made by medical advisers to try the usual remedy of the time, i. e., to bleed him. "But they could not get one drop of blood from me," he says, "either in arms or head, my body being as it were dried up with sorrows, griefs, and troubles."[10] A little later (in 1647) a still more profound disturbance occurred. "A great work of the Lord fell upon me," according to his own account, "to the admiration [i. e., wonder] of many, who thought I had been dead: and many came to see me for about fourteen days. I was very much altered in countenance and person, as if my body had been new molded or changed." He adds that in this state he could discern the inner condition of people and more or less read their thoughts.[11]

During this critical period of wandering and search, Fox was evidently not as random and aimless as his account written much later would imply. He was almost certainly finding bands of dissenting people in the midlands who put

[10] *Journal* I, p. 6.

[11] *Journal* I, pp. 20–21. Fox's *Journal* shows many instances of telepathy.

him on track of fresh light. He met with "tender people," he became acquainted with a remarkable woman named Elizabeth Hooton; he read his Bible until he almost knew it by heart and he began to have new impressions, or "openings" as he called his experiences. These were sudden flashes of insight which seemed to burst into his consciousness as revelations. He implies that they came as "auditions" though he may only mean that these things came inwardly and vividly to his consciousness. In any case, the "openings" brought the presentation of truths and insights which were current among the small mystical groups and in the writings of the spiritual reformers. They were truths like the following: "Only those who are born of God and have passed from death to life are true believers"; "Being bred at Oxford or Cambridge is not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ"; "God who made the world does not dwell in temples, or buildings made with hands." "The Scriptures can be understood only through the help of the Spirit who gave forth the Scriptures." These ideas were all essential principles of the spiritual groups spoken of above. Finally, after two years of eager search, Fox had an experience not unlike that which marked the crisis in Boehme's life. I give it in his own words: "As I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those esteemed the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. When all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do; then O! then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition'; and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory; for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief,

as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the prëeminence, who enlightens, and gives grace, and faith, and power. Thus when God doth work, who shall hinder it? and this I knew experimentally." [12] This constructive, illuminating and unifying experience marks an epoch in Fox's life. He now felt that he had the key to the mysteries of life in his own hand. He found in himself the way which he had sought in vain in books or creeds or systems. "Inward life," he says, "sprang up in me." The strain and perplexities were not entirely over. He did not by a sheer leap emerge upon a table land. His months were full of travail, but he had at least settled the main point, namely that there is an immediate revelation of God, through the Spirit or living Christ operating within the soul of man. "I saw that all was done through Christ the Life." [13] Fresh insights and comforting bursts of light continued to come to him —"great openings," as he calls them. None were more striking than the one in which he saw Light and Love triumphant: "I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of Light and Love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I saw the infinite Love of God." [14] Nothing could be finer than that and it gave Fox through all his sufferings and difficulties an underlying optimism, so that, as he puts it, "when at any time my condition was veiled, my secret belief was stayed firm, and hope underneath held me, as an anchor in the bottom of the sea."

Another impressive "opening" came to him apparently in the year 1648. His account of it is couched more in the style of Boehme than is that of any of his other experiences, and "the new smell" of creation is an extremely vivid feature: "Now was I come up in Spirit through the flam-

[12] *Journal* I, p. 11.
[13] *Journal* I, p. 14.
[14] *Journal* I, p. 19.

ing sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new; and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, and innocency, and righteousness, being renewed into the image of God by Christ Jesus, to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell. The creation was opened to me; and it was showed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue. I was at a stand in my mind, whether I should practice physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtues of things were so opened to me by the Lord. But I was immediately taken up in Spirit, to see into another or more steadfast state than Adam's innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall. And the Lord showed me that such as were faithful to him, in the power and light of Christ, should come up into that state in which Adam was before he fell; in which the admirable works of creation, and the virtues thereof, may be known, through the openings of that divine Word of wisdom and power, by which they were made." [15] He proceeds to say, very much after the manner of Boehme, that he came to "know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being," "through the Word of Wisdom [Boehme's 'Sophia'] that opens all things." [16]

In his early period, which was a period of visions and raptures and enthusiasm, Fox felt that he could read the inner life and spirit of the people around him somewhat as sensitive mystics of the Middle Ages felt that they could catch an odor of sanctity from those who were really-truly saints while they got a miserable stench from those who concealed hidden sins — so that in some towns they had to hold their noses as they walked through the streets! Fox says the Lord showed him the natures which were hurtful within, in the hearts and minds of wicked men — "the natures of dogs,

[15] *Journal* I, p. 28.
[16] *Journal* I, p. 29.

swine, vipers of Sodom and Egypt, Pharaoh, Cain, Ishmael, Esau, etc." Though these typical natures of evil were not present in his own heart, he was given a vivid "sense" of them in others, so that he might "speak to the condition" of those who had such inner natures."[17] It is interesting to find that Jacob Boehme makes much of these same typical inner natures. "A man's soul," he says, "is sometimes like a wolf, sometimes like a dog, sometimes like a lion, sometimes like a serpent — subtle, venomous and slanderous, sometimes like a toad — poisonous." Not only so, but Boehme further says at undue length that men's souls are inwardly and figuratively like Sodom and Egypt and Babylon, like Cain, Ishmael and Esau. In fact every person and country mentioned in the Bible is reproduced as a "state" within men's lives.[18]

Among the most beautiful of Fox's "openings" are his first hand experiences of the love of God. "As I was walking toward the jail [in Coventry]," he says, "the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'My love was always to thee, and thou art in my Love.' And I was ravished with the sense of the Love of God, and greatly strengthened in my inward man."[19] Of another experience he says, "One day when I had been walking solitarily abroad and was come home I was wrapped [he plainly meant 'rapt'] up in the Love of God so that I could not but admire [i.e., wonder at] the greatness of His Love."[20] Again something like an audition came to him when he was walking in the fields, where he seems to have felt himself especially close to the sources of life: "On a certain time, as I was walking in the fields, the Lord said unto me, 'Thy name is written in

[17] *Journal* I, p. 19 and in various places.

[18] This is worked out extensively in Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum.*

[19] *Journal* I, p. 47.

[20] *Journal* I, p. 14. He frequently speaks of being caught up in "raptures."

the Lamb's book of life which was before the foundation of the world'; and as the Lord spake it, I believed and saw it in the new birth." [21]

However these experiences may be psychologically interpreted, one fact seems very clear, from this period onward, a new power becomes evident in Fox's life. There were still recurrences of nervous disturbance. He was "struck blind" at Mansfield, and he underwent at a considerably later period just before the Restoration another profound travail of spirit and a marked physical alteration.[22] But on the whole there now occurred a striking unification of personality in him. He became possessed with a sense of mission. He was sure of his call—"I was commanded to turn people to that inward Light, Spirit, and Grace, by which all might know their salvation and their way to God." [23] He had become meantime absolutely unafraid and fearless. When an enraged man on the island of Walney brandished his pistol and called for Fox to come out, the latter walked straight up toward the cocked pistol without the least fear.[24] When a "reputed conjurer" in Derby jail proposed to do dreadful things to him and threatened to raise the devil and break the house down, Fox was "moved of the Lord" to say to him, "Come let us see what thou canst do; do thy worst now." We are not surprised to hear that "the power of the Lord chained the devil-raiser down, so he slunk away from me." [25] Two or three times opponents declared that they could not endure the power of his eyes. "Do not pierce me so with thy eyes; keep thy eyes off me," [26] one man cried out when Fox gazed intently at him. "A high notionist" in Carlisle came up and asked him, "what

[21] *Journal* I, p. 35.
[22] *Journal* I, pp. 24 and 447.
[23] *Journal* I, p. 36.
[24] *Journal* I, p. 134.
[25] *Journal* I, p. 72.
[26] *Journal* I, p. 167.

must be damned?" "I was moved immediately to tell him: 'That which spoke in him was to be damned.'" [27] The rabble of Cambridge students set upon him when he rode into their town in 1655, but he was fully their match. "Ye schollors was uppe hearinge of mee; and was exceedinge rude: but I kept on my horse backe and ridd through ym. in ye Lords power: Oh said they he shines hee glisters." [28] William Penn's testimony on this point of Fox's ability to stand the universe and to meet all types of men is all that could be desired. He says: "I write my knowledge and not report, and my witness is true, having been with him for weeks and months together on divers occasions, and those of the nearest and most exercising nature, and that by night and by day, by sea and by land, in this and in foreign countries: and I can say I never saw him out of his place, or not a match for every service or occasion." [29]

I have used most of my available space on the experience and personality of Fox and have reserved little for a study of his *interpretations* of his principles. I have done this, however, advisedly. The great thing after all about George Fox was his first hand experience and the personality which his experience produced—"a new and heavenly-minded man; a divine and a naturalist and all of God Almighty's making," as William Penn declared.[30] Others, especially Robert Barclay, the Scotch Quaker, gave an elaborate interpretation of the central principle of Quakerism, couched in the terms of seventeenth century psychology and metaphysics, but fortunately Fox knew no metaphysics, was simple, natural and naïve, and was primarily concerned, like a plain man, "to speak right on" and tell what he had heard with his own ears, what his eyes had seen and his

[27] *Journal* I, p. 166.
[28] *Journal,* Cambridge Edition, I, p. 190.
[29] *Journal,* Preface, p. l.
[30] *Journal,* Preface, p. i.

hands handled of the Word of life. If he had read Boehme's books, he at any rate showed no interest in the Teutonic philosopher's difficult account of the fundamental nature of the visible and invisible universe. It seems almost certain that Fox got his knowledge of Boehme through others and not from the writings of the latter. He may very likely never have known the source of the influences which came to him. One central interest dominates Fox and that is the *testimony of the soul.* William Penn has some apt words on this point. He says that Fox was endued with "clear and wonderful depth." "He would go to the marrow of things." "The most awful, living reverent frame I ever felt or beheld I must say was his in prayer. And truly it was a testimony he knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men." He "bottomed people," Penn adds, on the principle that there is something of God in themselves.[31]

The mysticism of Fox leaves wholly behind and on one side the long trail of metaphysical speculation which came into mediæval mysticism from the Neo-Platonists. The abstract and negative God, solitary, above and beyond all our ladders of approach and to be reached only through a superhuman ecstasy and "flight of the alone to the Alone," is nowhere mentioned in Fox. The *via negativa* is not his highway of holiness. He is emphatically an affirmation mystic. In his stress and agony he found something in his own soul which flooded him with fresh light, which poured a new energy into him, which restored and recreated him and which seemed without any further debate to be something of God within him. He calls the experience "the daystar rising in the heart," or he says that it is the germinating seed of Christ, or he names it the operation of the Light within, or it is thought of as the Spirit working in the central deep of man. Writing to his own father and mother, in

[31] *Journal* I, Preface, pp. xlvi–xlviii.

1652, he says, "to that of God in you both I speak and beseech you both to return within and wait to hear the voice of God there." [32]

Fox, without altogether realizing the step, broke utterly with Augustinian theology. He no longer thinks in terms of human depravity. The "man" whom he knows best is not a mass of sin, foul and defiled from birth, unattended by any divine splendor or untouched by any inner springs of grace. He does not feel that his world is separated by a vast chasm from God's world. He believes rather that man and God are very close companions. In fact, somehow — he does not undertake to solve the *how* — something of God is embedded in the very structure of the human soul. Barclay, with his Cartesian metaphysics, makes this divine seed a thing wholly foreign to man himself, a seed-particle deposited in the otherwise barren soil of man's fallen nature and brought from another world across the chasm into this one. Fox is innocent of this contrivance. It does not occur to him that the chasm is there. He is impressed with the principle of darkness in the universe. He knows that evil is an appalling fact and he says much of Satan and the seed of the serpent which must be bruised. But God for him is the supreme reality and He is of such a nature that He is somehow unsundered from the soul whom He has created. Something radiates out from the life of God and shines into our souls with illuminating power so that we can see ourselves as we are and can draw upon the resources of help within our reach. "That which shows a man his sin is the same that takes it away." [33] Every spiritual step is a process of inward life. There is no way for a man to be saved apart from the man himself. All that really matters is the discovery of power, the formation of an attitude, conformity to the true model, the construction of character

[32] *Epistles*, v.
[33] *Journal* I, p. 67.

and habits, the creation of a spirit. "I bid them give over babbling about the Scriptures," Fox says, "I told them not to dispute about God and Christ but to obey Him." [34] He changes his central interest from a concern about getting ready to die to a profound concern about getting ready to live. There is nothing forensic in his Christianity. He is done with "notions" and schemes. He is endeavoring to launch a movement which begins and ends with *life,* and the ground of his faith in this life-movement is his confidence that man has something of God in himself and can correspond with God, as the eye does with light, until the inner life is fortified with divine power and recreated in inward purity and holiness. "Live in the life of God," he writes, "and feel it." [35] "Dear lambs, and babes and plants of the Lord God," again he says, "dwell every one of you in your own [i. e., in your own inner self] that you may feel the precious springs of God." [36] In a beautiful Epistle of counsel, he reminds his friends that they have tasted of "the immediate working power of the Lord," that they have experienced "an alteration" in their minds and have learned to "see from whence virtue doth come, and strength that doth renew the inward man and doth refresh you." Even "though you see little and know little, and have little," he continues, "and you see your emptiness, and see your nakedness and barrenness and unfruitfulness and see the hardness of your hearts and your own unworthiness; it is the *light* that discovers all this and the love of God to you. So wait upon God in that which is pure, in your measure, and stand still in it every one to see your Savior." [37]

All this sounds naïve and uncritical. It is what Fox himself once called "the movings and bubblings of life." The

[34] *Journal* I, pp. 50–56.
[35] *Epistles,* xcv.
[36] *Epistles,* lxxxi.
[37] *Epistles,* xvi.

best test of its religious value is found in the type of personality which the experience produced in Fox himself and its dynamic power in the Society which he founded. He had little education and, as Penn puts it, " the side of his understanding which lay next to the world " was untrained and undeveloped and yet he plainly bore " the marks of God's finger and hand." There was an extraordinary interior depth within him, a moral quality of a rare order, an unusual power of penetration into the heart of social problems, a great capacity of leadership and what Penn well calls " a religious majesty " which " visibly clothed him with a divine preference and authority." He broke with all recognized authorities. He denied all outward infallibilities and yet he kept his movement from running into a wild and lawless chaos. One of his jailers pronounced him " clear as a bell and stiff as a tree." He knew what constituted spiritual religion and he stood unbendingly for it. Persecution could not weaken him, prisons could not break him, or budge him. One might truthfully say of him what the present Master of Balliol College (A. L. Smith) said of one of Fox's later followers, Thomas Hodgkin, " I always came away from him with higher thoughts and the feeling of having breathed purer air; his walk with God was so real. He was one of those men who make us feel that personality is more real and more immortal than anything else in this world." He produced a religious fellowship — he called it a Society and not a Church — with no visible head, with no rigid system, with no cramping official authority, with no creed, no ordinances, no ritual. Exceedingly individualistic, free and democratic, it nevertheless held together by its internal coherency and it has proved to be the most impressive experiment in Christian history of a group-mysticism, a religious body maintaining corporate silence as the basis of worship and affirming for two centuries and a half its faith in spirit-guided ministry. Its weakness has not been its radicalism

or its fanaticism, but its conservatism and crystallization. It has been much inclined to settle into a dangerous quietism, the seeds of which lay hidden in the original interpretation of its principle, but whenever strong social sympathies and human interests have blended with its inner passion for God a fine type of religious life has flowered out and a beautiful quality of sainthood has been realized.

# THE MYSTICISM OF WORDSWORTH

E. Hershey Sneath

Notwithstanding the production of an exceptionally large literature relating to Wordsworth's poetry, very few writers have reckoned sufficiently with his mysticism in its influence upon his life and art; neither has the literary critic nor professional psychologist dealt thoroughly with the nature of this unique mode of functioning of the poet's consciousness. And yet there can be no adequate understanding of much of the poetry of Wordsworth without a careful consideration of this conspicuous feature of his personal psychology. Those refined spiritual conceptions of Nature and her wholesome ministry to the spirit of man; that perception of the unity of things, and of the unity of man under moral law; those intimations of preëxistence and immortality, to be found in his poetry, are largely due to the mystic flashes of his genius and to the more profound trance experiences that gave warmth to it. And when we eliminate the poetry of mystical insight from his large body of verse, comparatively little is left that would entitle him to a seat among the immortals.

It is fortunate that we are able to deal with this unique experience, to a very large extent, first hand. "The Prelude," Wordsworth's elaborate metrical autobiography, "The Excursion," "Lines Composed above Tintern Abbey," "Ode, Intimations of Immortality," and other poems by the author, are descriptive and, in a measure, explanatory of it. There are also several letters containing conversations of Wordsworth which throw light on the nature of the trance experience to which he was subject in his boyhood

and youth, and which largely determined his spiritual interpretation of Nature and Man. With such sources of information at our command, there is little danger of going astray in our attempts to discover the real nature of Wordsworth's mysticism.

"The Prelude" is Wordsworth's chief autobiographical poem. It is, as the sub-title suggests, an account of the "growth of a poet's mind." In it we find a record of experiences which leave no doubt in the reader's mind that Wordsworth was essentially a mystic. In the first book he relates three that occurred in early boyhood, which, while not of the trance order, were the beginnings of that mystical apprehension of Nature so peculiar to the poet. They are experiences of a moral character and are interpreted by him as Nature's "visitations" to his soul. The first recites an adventure in trapping woodcock by night. In his pursuit, he stole a bird trapped by another. The result was that, under the influence of a guilty conscience, he had an immediate apprehension of Nature as possessed of spirit, and bent on punishing him for his theft:

> "And when the deed was done
> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod." [1]

If this were the only case of the kind, it might be dismissed without consideration. But, when we take it in connection with similar cases, we will note thus early in the poet's experience a unique functioning of consciousness in its relation to Nature, which later takes on the form of a profound mystical trance.

Immediately following the above account, Wordsworth relates another case of boyish theft. He robs a raven's nest,

[1] *The Prelude,* Bk. I, ll. 321–325.

and again he is the subject of peculiar sounds as well as sights. The sound of the wind seems unusual in character, and the clouds wear an unearthly aspect. It is not a boy's ordinary perception of Nature. There is something mysterious about it — so mysterious that Wordsworth many years afterward regarded it as one of Nature's "visitings" in which she administered wholesome moral discipline. The important point is, that here again consciousness functions in a peculiar manner — the boy perceives a "strange utterance" in the wind, an unusual aspect in the sky, and a peculiar movement in the clouds:

> "Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
> Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
> Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
> Our object and inglorious, yet the end
> Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
> Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
> And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
> But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
> Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
> Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
> While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
> Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
> Of earth — and with what motion moved the clouds!" [2]

This, too, might be dismissed as merely the result of the activity of a vivid imagination under the influence of peculiar excitement; but the narrative is followed by the recital of another incident which resulted in a more pronounced experience of a unique and most uncanny character. Once more the boy is guilty of "an act of stealth." He takes a boat belonging to another, and, as he rows on the lake, under the influence of fear and compunction, he becomes conscious of a spirit in Nature. A huge black peak pursues him "with purpose of its own, and measured motion like a living

[2] *The Prelude,* Bk. I, ll. 326–339.

thing." For many days afterward he has a vague "sense of unknown modes of being." Normal sense-perception is superseded by an abnormal consciousness. Familiar objects are banished, and strange and mighty forms take their place by day and trouble him in his dreams by night. This is one of Nature's "severer interventions," and the effect on consciousness is unusual compared with what might be expected in the case of the average boy under similar circumstances:

> "I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
> And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
> Went heaving through the water like a swan;
> When, from behind that craggy steep till then
> The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
> As if with voluntary power instinct
> Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
> And growing still in stature the grim shape
> Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
> For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
> And measured motion like a living thing,
> Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
> And through the silent water stole my way
> Back to the covert of the willow tree;
> There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
> And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
> And serious mood; but after I had seen
> That spectacle, for many days, my brain
> Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
> Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
> There hung a darkness, call it solitude
> Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
> Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
> Of sky or sea, no colors of green fields;
> But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
> Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
> By day, and were a trouble to my dreams." [3]

Again it may be said that these somewhat singular mental

[3] *The Prelude,* Bk. I, ll. 373–400.

experiences — these "images floating on the moving deeps of feeling"— might be dismissed as not indicative of a mystical behavior of consciousness, were they to be considered independently of subsequent experience of a far more pronounced mystical character. But one finds, as he follows Wordsworth's account of his mental evolution, these early experiences were really the beginning or dawn of a decidedly supernormal consciousness that developed in his intercourse with Nature, and which enabled him "to see into the life of things," as well as into the life of man. Often during this early period, in the pursuits of childhood, he says:

> "I felt
> Gleams like the flashing of a shield; the earth
> And common face of Nature spoke to me
> Rememberable things." [4]

That these were mystic gleams there will be little doubt as we follow him from childhood to adolescence. Here we find the love of solitude so characteristic of the mystic. As he himself remarks concerning his relations to Nature during this period:

> "I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
> The self-sufficing power of Solitude." [5]

It was during these moments, when alone with Nature, that "the visionary power" developed:

> "for I would walk alone,
> Under the quiet stars, and at that time
> Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
> To breathe an elevated mood, by form
> Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
> If the night blackened with a coming storm,
> Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
> The ghostly language of the ancient earth,

[4] *The Prelude,* Bk. I, ll. 585–588.
[5] *The Prelude,* Bk. II, ll. 76–77.

Or make their dim abode in distant winds,
Thence did I drink the visionary power." [6]

However, not only in storms, but also in more peaceful scenes, does mystical consciousness function. He now feels marvelous things; he now experiences "a holy calm" that inhibits bodily sight. In these moments he sees, as St. Theresa would say, with "the eyes of the soul." In other words, the trance consciousness now dawns, and an inner world emerges from the depths of the soul. These trance states are frequent at this time. Often, on his way to school, as he walks around Esthwaite Lake, he seats himself on some eminence to view the peaceful vale below. Then the "blessed mood" takes possession of his soul. Normal sight gives way to supersensible vision. The outer prospect is superseded by a prospect in the mind.

"Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
Was audible; and sate among the woods
Alone upon some jutting eminence,
At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
How shall I seek the origin? where find
Faith in the marvelous things which then I felt?
Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind." [7]

In the description of his experience at this time, Wordsworth calls attention to a contribution which his mind makes to objects of Nature. Extra-mental objects are invested with a "new splendour," which increases his obeisance for, and devotion to, Nature, and fills his soul with ecstatic joy.

[6] *The Prelude,* Bk. II, ll. 303–311.
[7] *The Prelude,* Bk. II, ll. 339–352.

This transfiguration of Nature is attributed by him to an internal "auxiliar light."

> "An auxiliar light
> Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
> Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds,
> The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
> Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
> A like dominion, and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
> Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
> And hence my transport." [8]

Later, when we consider Wordsworth's celebrated ode to Immortality, we will meet with a more detailed description of this "vision splendid" due to the "auxiliar light."

One of the marked tendencies of the mystic is an apprehension or intuition of the unity of things. So pronounced is this perception of unity that it frequently cancels all individuality or separateness of things, and sees only the oneness of all Reality. Mysticism, whether philosophic, theologic, religious or poetic, has been prolific of Pantheism. The apprehension of the unity of Being is often so profound that so-called corporeal things and finite spirits are submerged in "the All" or Absolute. At this period of Wordsworth's career a mystical, unifying tendency is manifest. He begins to observe affinities among things that are not apparent to duller minds. He recognizes a brotherhood among the objects of Nature. Things are instinct with life and happiness, and, under the influence of great emotion, he perceives a cosmic harmony — a unity in the manifold. His joy reaches the point of ecstasy as he communes with all things in earth and heaven. He hears them singing the same song. So profound is his mood or trance that the bodily ear is overcome by the prelude of the strain, and he hears with the spiritual ear a soul-entrancing chorus.

[8] *The Prelude,* Bk. II, ll. 368–376.

"Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed." [9]

This is a mystical intuition of the unity of Nature. "There is a synthetic functioning of consciousness, largely dominated by feeling, that cancels the ordinary perception of Nature by the senses as a world of independent entities bound together only by space relations, and substitutes for it a world of objects invested with spirit-life, and existing in spiritual relations, all constituting a harmonious system, and all adoring and loving the one Uncreated Source of Reality. But Wordsworth's mysticism does not abolish the individuality of things as philosophical mysticism often does. It does not swamp their being in the immeasurable Being of the Infinite. It destroys merely the world of uncritical sense-perception, which is a mere manifold or multiplicity of corporeal objects, and by intuition lays hold of the spiritual reality of

[9] *The Prelude,* Bk. II, ll. 396–418.

things, with their mutual spiritual relations and their relations to a spiritual Absolute.

"Furthermore, he, too, is part of the world and is in communion with things, whether earthly or heavenly. And, as he listens to the song of a spiritual universe, and his own soul is enraptured with the music, his mystical communion, though ecstatic, is not so profound as to submerge his own self-consciousness in the Being of the Absolute, as is the case so often with religious mystics. The 'mortal limits of the self,' to use Tennyson's expression, are not 'loosed.' The boundary lines of finite personality are not wiped out. Therefore, there is no Pantheism here. The distinct reality of 'the Uncreated,' the reality of things, and the reality of self are preserved. Wordsworth's mystical mind has simply apprehended the spiritual nature and relations of *all* Reality." [10]

If we turn from *The Prelude* for a few moments to *The Excursion* — Wordsworth's most elaborate poem — and compare the accounts of his mystical experiences in boyhood and youth with the accounts of *The Prelude* given above, we will find an essential agreement. There can be little doubt that Wordsworth, in his account of the Wanderer — one of the leading characters of *The Excursion* — is giving an account of himself. The experience of the Wanderer's boyhood and youth is that of a mystic. "The things he saw" as a boy are similar to those described in the early books of *The Prelude* that refer to the poet's childhood. They are unusual. They are associated with Nature. They are seen in solitude. They involve communion "not from terror free." They are powerfully felt, and make such deep impressions on the mind as to disturb "the bodily sense." They are impressions over which he broods, narrowing the field of consciousness, concentrating the mind

[10] Sneath, *Wordsworth,* Boston, 1912, pp. 25–26.

upon it, and thus intensifying the "pictured lines" until "they acquired the liveliness of dreams."

"From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak,
In summer, tended cattle on the hills;
But, through the inclement and the perilous days
Of long-continuing winter, he repaired,
Equipped with satchel, to a school, that stood
Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge,
Remote from view of city spire, or sound
Of minster clock! From that bleak tenement
He, many an evening, to his distant home
In solitude returning, saw the hills
Grow larger in the darkness; all alone
Beheld the stars come out above his head,
And travelled through the wood, with no one near
To whom he might confess the things he saw.
"So the foundations of his mind were laid,
In such communion, not from terror free,
While yet a child, and long before his time,
Had he perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed
So vividly great objects that they lay
Upon his mind like substances, whose presence
Perplexed the bodily sense. He had received
A precious gift; for, as he grew in years,
With these impressions would he still compare
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms;
And, being still unsatisfied with aught
Of dimmer character, he thence attained
An active power to fasten images
Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye
On all things which the moving seasons brought
To feed such appetite — nor this alone
Appeased his yearning: — in the after-day
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags
He sate, and even in their fixed lineaments,

Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
Or by creative feeling overborne,
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
Expression every varying." [11]

But, it is in the description of the Wanderer's youth that we find, as was the case in *The Prelude,* Wordsworth's mysticism becoming more pronounced. Here, too, it is associated with Nature and solitude. Here, also, his experience, although involved in and stimulated by sense, is primarily more subjective, arising largely from inner spiritual depths. His animal being seems to be submerged into his spiritual being. Thought is lost in feeling. Here is a visitation from God, and there is a rapturous communion that transcends even prayer and praise. In short, the youth's experience, as described by Wordsworth, bears all the essential marks of mystical consciousness, as the following words reveal:

"Such was the Boy — but for the growing Youth
What soul was his, when, from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked —
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him: — Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.

[11] *The Excursion,* Bk. I, ll. 118–162.

No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!"[12]

It is Nature that thus affects the mind of the youth. Often, when alone with her, when "communing with the glorious universe," his experience is so ecstatic that he is as one possessed. Indeed! according to the poet's account, he *is* possessed. In this state the great realities are objects of emotional intuition and vision. He *feels* his faith in immortality. He *sees* spiritual prospects:

"A Herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes *possessed.*
O then how beautiful, how bright, appeared
The written promise! Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays
The mystery, the life which cannot die;
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
All things, responsive to the writing, there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite:
There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,— he *saw.*"[13]

These accounts of the mystical experiences of Wordsworth's boyhood and youth in *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* are supplemented by conversations of the poet recorded in several letters written by his friends. In a letter from Rev. Robert Perceval Graves, of Windermere, we find a description by Wordsworth of the trance to which he was subject in boyhood. According to it, the world with which consciousness was concerned was not an extra-mental, but an

[12] *The Excursion,* Bk. I, ll. 197–219.
[13] *The Excursion,* Bk. II, ll. 219–232.

intra-mental one; not a world of corporeal objects, but of the mind's own creation,— the mind acting apparently independent of an external stimulus. "I remember," writes Mr. Graves, "Mr. Wordsworth saying, that at a particular stage of his mental progress, he used to be frequently so rapt into an unreal transcendental world of ideas that the external world seemed no longer to exist in relation to him, and he *had to reconvince himself of its existence by clasping a tree, or something that happened to be near him.* I could not help connecting this fact with that obscure passage in his great *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality,* in which he speaks of

> "Those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things;
> Fallings from us, vanishings; etc." [14]

To the same effect are the words found in a letter by Professor Bonamy Price: "It happened one day that the poet, my wife, and I were taking a walk together by the side of Rydal Water. We were then by the sycamores under Nab Scar. The aged poet was in a most genial mood, and it suddenly occurred to me that I might, without unwarrantable presumption, seize the golden opportunity thus offered, and ask him to explain these mysterious words. So I addressed him with an apology, and begged him to explain, what my own feeble mother-wit was unable to unravel, and for which I had in vain sought the assistance of others, what were those 'fallings from us, vanishings,' for which, above all other things, he gave God thanks. The venerable old man raised his aged form erect; he was walking in the middle, and passed across me to a five-barred gate in the wall which bounded the road on the side of the lake. He clenched the top bar firmly with his right hand, pushed strongly against it, and then uttered these ever-memorable

[14] *Poems,* edited by William Knight, London, 1896, VIII, p. 201.

words: 'There was a time in my life when I had to push against something that resisted, to be sure that there was anything outside of me. I was sure of my own mind; everything else fell away, and vanished into thought.' Thought, he was sure of; matter for him, at the moment, was an unreality — nothing but a thought." [15] Again we have the world of sense-experience cancelled, and a transcendental or supra-sensible world constitutes the object of consciousness.

In his eighteenth year, Wordsworth entered St. John's College, Cambridge. Here, as in boyhood and early youth, his mysticism is evident. He feels

> "Incumbencies more awful, visitings
> Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul." [16]

Now he invests "every natural form," even the stones of the highway, with a moral life. For him they are spiritual beings, and he *sees* them feel. For him the whole world of material things is imbedded "in a quickening soul." All things respire with "inward meaning." It is a world of his own creation: it exists only for him and for God, who sees into the human heart:

> "Here to record that I was mounting now
> To such community with highest truth —
> A track pursuing, not untrod before,
> From strict analogies by thought supplied
> Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.
> To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
> I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
> Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
> Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning." [17]

[15] *Poems,* edited by William Knight, London, 1896, VIII, pp. 201–202.

[16] *The Prelude,* Bk. III, ll. 119–120.

[17] *The Prelude,* Bk. III, ll. 125–135.

Wordsworth, at times, betrayed his feelings, inner visions, and intuitions by gestures and looks which some interpreted as a kind of "madness"; and madness it was, says the poet, if "moods of thoughtfulness matured to inspiration," or prophetic and poetic vision, may be regarded as madness. However, with him it was mystical insight, similar in character to the inspiration and vision of the Hebrew prophets.

We next meet with an experience in which Wordsworth's soul is unveiled, and seems to be in the very presence of God; to have "glimmering views" of immortality, and to become conscious of the dignity and worth of moral endeavor. It occurs during the summer vacation after his first year at Cambridge, while the poet is making the circuit of the lake at Hawkshead. His account of it is as follows:

> "Gently did my soul
> Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
> Naked, as in the presence of her God.
> While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
> A heart that had not been disconsolate:
> Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
> At least not felt; and restoration came
> Like an intruder knocking at the door
> Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
> The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
> — Of that external scene which round me lay,
> Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
> Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
> And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
> Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
> How life pervades the undecaying mind;
> How the immortal soul with God-like power
> Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
> That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
> Man, if he do but live within the light
> Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
> His being armed with strength that cannot fail." [18]

This is an experience of mystical intuition and vision, of

[18] *The Prelude*, Bk. IV, ll. 150–171.

spiritual illumination. The noetic element is conspicuous. God, immortality, and the dignity and value of moral effort are the great realities revealed.

This summer vacation records another experience unique even among the many unique experiences of his youth and young manhood. It involves a "call" to the poet's office or vocation — a spiritual dedication to a particular life-work. However, it is not a case of self-dedication. He is conscious of relationship to a higher Power — the Spirit of Nature — who makes vows for him. To fail to perform them would be to "sin greatly." This dedication occurred one morning on his return from a dance. The beauty of the dawn was responsible for the mystic mood.

> "Magnificent
> The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
> Glorious as e'er I had beheld — in front,
> The sea lay laughing at a distance; near
> The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds
> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn —
> Dews, vapors, and the melody of birds,
> And labourers going forth to till the fields.
> Ah, need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
> My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
> In thankful blessedness, which yet survives!"[19]

After his graduation from college, Wordsworth made a visit to London. Even here, in the midst of the din and turmoil of the large city, he feels himself in touch with the Spirit of Nature, who is gradually leading him to a love of Man. Although there is no trance experience evident here, there can be little doubt that, in his apprehension of the city

[19] *The Prelude,* Bk. IV, ll. 323–338.

and its varied life, Wordsworth's mind was affected by his mystical consciousness. It will be remembered how, in earlier years, his soul observed affinities in things "where no brotherhood exists to passive minds"; how he was able to intuit the harmony and unity of Reality — feeling the sentiment of "Being spread o'er all things." A similar power is his in the city. Here, the diversity of objects which he beholds is not "blank confusion" for him, as it is for many for whom things are

> "melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end."[20]

"The Spirit of Nature is upon him, and

> 'The Soul of Beauty and enduring Life
> Vouchsafe her inspiration, and diffused,
> Through meager lines and colours, and the press
> Of self-destroying, transitory things,
> Composure, and ennobling Harmony."[21]

Here he sees men, multitudes of them, under divers conditions and in divers states — a vast, heterogeneous, motley, and often repulsive throng; but his mystical mind looks beyond all individual peculiarities, all personal conditions, all differentiating physical and moral shapes, and sees the essential, the universal in Man — the tie that binds all human beings into one great system or brotherhood. The synthetic vision is his once more, and he beholds

> 'the unity of man,
> One spirit over ignorance .and vice
> Predominant, in good and evil hearts;
> One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
> For the sun's light.'"[22]

[20] *The Prelude,* Bk. VII, ll. 726–728.
[21] *The Prelude,* Bk. VII, ll. 767–771.
[22] Sneath, *Wordsworth,* Boston, 1912, pp. 49–50. *The Prelude,* Bk. VIII, ll. 668-672.

Thus from early childhood, through youth and young manhood, Wordsworth was subject to mystical experiences that transfigured the face of Nature, and to mystical moods that varied from mild abstraction, yielding flashes and gleams of insight into the heart of Nature and Man, to profound illuminating trances in which his soul was enabled to perceive the spiritual nature and unity of all reality, to stand in the presence of God, and to gain a vision of the soul's immortality and the dignity of duty. It was thus that "the vision and the faculty divine" were developed in him. It was thus that he came "to see into the life of things" and men.

We now come to an interesting and pathetic experience in the life of the poet — one that involves a temporary loss of his mystical power. His account of this spiritual crisis is contained in the eleventh and twelfth books of *The Prelude*. It is a record of unsouling or despiritualizing the world of things and men. This was largely due to his great interest in the French Revolution, and to the more abstract study of man under the influence of the rationalistic spirit of the age. Very early Wordsworth espoused the cause of the revolutionary movement. With ardent soul he cherished high hopes for humanity. He had naïve confidence in the power of "right reason." But the excesses of the Revolution, and England's attitude early in the crisis, filled his soul with much bitterness and disappointment. In his extremity he took refuge from men in an abstract study of man — a study of man in his essential nature,— endowed with lordly powers of reason and will,— who eventually would throw off the tyranny of custom and law. He subjected both man and Nature to the analytical scrutiny of the logical intellect, with the result that he soon lost not only his faith in moral reason, but also his consciousness of a Spiritual Presence in Nature. His mystical soul no longer functioned. He was in the grip of a "moral disease." He was in the darkness

of the skeptic's night. There is a similarity here to the peculiar experience of such religious mystics as Henry Suso, St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, and Madame Guyon, which experience is known as "the dark night of the soul." With the religious mystics this is a period of desolation and torment. To them it is one of the stages in the "mystic way," leading to a higher and richer mystical experience.

From this "malady" Wordsworth gradually recovered under the tender ministry of his sister, and the healing power of Nature. With his recovery there came a rebirth of the mystical vision and intuition. Through the influence of Dorothy Wordsworth he was made at this time to seek beneath the poet's name his "office upon earth," and the dozen years immediately following are pronounced by competent critics to be the period in which he produced his best poetry — the dominant characteristic of which is mystical insight.

The *Lyrical Ballads* represent the first fruits of Wordsworth's mental and spiritual restoration. Among these ballads we find poetry relating to both Nature and Man. In the former, the "mystic gleam" is most evident. Here Nature is instinct with life and mind. She pulsates with happiness and love. Out of her abundant resources she ministers to Man's mind and heart. She gives of her wealth to those who commune with her; who indulge in "a wise passiveness"; who come forth into the light of things with a heart "that watches and receives"; who observe "the hour of feeling," in which

> "One moment may give us more
> Than years of toiling reason." [23]

In such poems as "Lines Written in Early Spring," "To My Sister," "Expostulation and Reply," and "The Tables Turned," we note this mystical approach of Wordsworth to Nature. Here we have the poet, as in boyhood and youth,

in close touch with Nature's spirit, communing with her and seeing deep "into the life of things." Coleridge once remarked to Hazlitt, before the poetry of the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared in print, that "it had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition rather than by deduction." [23] Intuition it unquestionably was — born largely of mystical feeling.

Among the poems of the *Lyrical Ballads,* is one entitled, "Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey." In this poem we have once more a description of his mystical trance. In it the poet deals with both its psychological and physiological aspects. It is a "serene and blessed mood" in which the soul's burden of the "unintelligible world is lightened"; a mood in which breathing and the circulation of the blood almost cease. The bodily powers are "laid asleep," but the soul is awake. The eye of sense is quieted, its function being inhibited by the power of harmony and joy,— but the inner eye is active, and gains insight into Nature's life.

> "Not less, I trust,
> To them I may have owed another gift,
> Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened: — that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul;
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things." [24]

[23] *The Liberal,* II, 371.
[24] *Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,* ll. 35–48.

Later in the poem, in memorable lines, he acknowledges having felt a Presence in things and men. He has experienced "a sense sublime" of "a motion and a spirit" that is operative in all things and in the human mind. The experience is due to Nature, and because of it he recognizes in her the guide and guardian of his heart, the very soul of his moral being.

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear,— both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being." [25]

This is mysticism — a mood in which there is immediate experience of, or contact with, a Higher Spiritual Power, and a recognition of the essential unity of all things. So intimate is the relation between the Universal Presence and things and minds, that he barely escapes resolving the last two realities into the first. Indeed, there have been those, like Bishop Wordsworth, his kinsman-biographer, who have interpreted this poem pantheistically. However, this is a misinterpretation. Pantheism identifies finite things and minds with the Absolute or "the All." It makes them

[25] *Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,* ll. 93–111.

merely modes of its energizing. But Wordsworth does not do this. He merely says that the Presence is in things and in minds, that "the light of setting suns," "the round ocean," "the living air," "the blue sky," and "the mind of man" are its dwelling; that it is a motion and a spirit which is not identical with "all thinking things" and "objects of all thought," but which impels them; and not that it is all things, but that it "rolls through all things." In other words, he preserves the individuality of the Universal Presence, the individuality of things, and the individuality of the finite spirit, while at the same time he intuitively recognizes that spirit rather than matter is the great reality; and that Man, Nature, and the Spirit of Nature are all involved in an intimate spiritual relationship. He apprehends that in a true sense things and minds live and move and have their being in a Higher Spiritual Power and yet are distinct from it. The Higher Power is, indeed, immanent, but it is also transcendent. It is not Pantheism, but Theistic Idealism that is taught in this great poem.

The Grasmere period of the poet's life is especially rich in communion with Nature, and his spiritual interpretation of the physical world is very evident. More than a score of poems testify to this. Those, however, in which we are specially interested are: "It was an April morning; fresh and clear," "To Joanna," "The Cuckoo," and "Yes, it was the mountain Echo." In these poems the impressions of sense seem to sink deep into the spirit, where, affected by mystical feeling, by some strange psychological chemistry, they are transformed into a new mental product. In this work of transformation, a synthetic or unifying power is manifest. Many sounds and sights are fused into one. In the poem entitled "It was an April morning" the various sounds of Nature lose their identity and become "the voice of common pleasure,"—"some natural produce of the air." In the poem, "To Joanna," the laugh of the maiden, under

the spell of Wordsworth's mood, fills the mountains. His ear is touched "with dreams and visionary impulses." In the poem, "To the Cuckoo," the cuckoo's voice is universalized, and, under the influence of the notes of the "blessed bird," the earth is unsubstantialized, it is supplanted by that ideal world constructed from materials of the inner self. The cuckoo not only brings to him "a tale of visionary hours"— the mystical hours of childhood already described; but now, even in young manhood, under the magic influence of its "wandering Voice,"

> "the earth we pace
> Again appears to be
> An unsubstantial, faery place."

In "Yes, it was the mountain Echo," the echo or series of echoes of the cuckoo's notes impel the poet to speak of echoes from beyond the grave, heard by the inner ear,— intimations of immortality given of God to the spiritual self: —

> "Hears not also mortal Life?
> Hear not we, unthinking Creatures!
> Slaves of folly, love, or strife —
> Voices of two different natures?
>
> Have not *we* too? — yes, we have
> Answers, and we know not whence;
> Echoes from beyond the grave,
> Recognized intelligence!
>
> Such rebounds our inward ear
> Catches sometimes from afar —
> Listen, ponder, hold them dear;
> For of God,— of God they are." [26]

Whose consciousness, but that of a mystic, under the influence of Nature, on the occasion of ordinary sense-impressions, could give rise to such spiritual auditions, such tran-

[26] *Yes, it was the mountain Echo,* ll. 9–20.

scendental apprehensions? They are the mystic's immediate consciousness of God and immortality.

Finally, in studying the mysticism of Wordsworth we are brought to the consideration of his superb creation,—" Ode, Intimations of Immorality," of which Emerson said, " It is the high-water mark which the intellect has reached in this age "; [27] and of which, with " Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey," Professor Saintsbury remarked, that not only do we reach " the summits of Wordsworth's poetry," but that these two poems are " poems of such astonishing magnificence that it is only more astonishing that any one should have read them and failed to see what a poet had come before the world." [28] This great ode is autobiographical in character, and is based on the poet's mystic gleams and trance experiences of childhood. In a Fenwick note, he says: " There may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere —

> A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb
> What should it know of death! —

But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that my difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the Spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenital to this, I was often unable to think of external things

[27] Emerson, *English Traits,* Boston, 1883, p. 282.
[28] Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature,* New York and London, 1896, p. 54.

as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines —

> Obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings, etc." [29]

We have already quoted Wordsworth's remarks contained in the letters of Rev. Mr. Graves and Professor Price, to the same effect. This poem is really a poem on child psychology, based on Wordsworth's experience as a child, together with certain inferences founded on it, although such experience was believed by him to be common to all men. According to Wordsworth, to the perception of the child the world of physical things is invested with a celestial glory and splendor that is not present to the consciousness of the adult. With the adult it is a case of lost vision. With him " the vision splendid " gradually fades into the light of common day.

> " There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight,
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream.
> It is not now as it hath been of yore; —
> Turn wheresoe'er I may,
> By night or day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
>
> " The Rainbow comes and goes,
> And lovely is the Rose,

[29] *Poems,* edited by William Knight, Vol. VIII, p. 189.

The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

"Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm: —
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
— But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" [30]

This radiant glory and splendor peculiar to childhood's vision of the world indicates, according to our poet, the nearness of the child-mind to a preëxistent state. It is largely an inheritance from another world. Incarnation or birth means merely sleep and forgetfulness of former mental riches. As the child advances in years he grows farther and farther away from this heaven that lies about him in his infancy.

[30] *Ode, Intimations of Immortality,* ll. 1–18, 36–57.

Youth's path is still attended by the glorious vision, but manhood "perceives it die away."

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He upholds the light, and whence it flows
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day." [31]

But the experience of childhood involves more than the perception of a world "apparelled in celestial light." As the poet notes the child's desire to gain earthly experience, he wonders why a being possessed of such marvelous powers should be so eager to exchange them for the limitations of the man. And what, according to Wordsworth, are these remarkable gifts of the child? The answer to this question throws further light on his psychology of childhood — a psychology which was undoubtedly born of his mystical experience — especially the trance experiences that have been described.

According to Wordsworth, the child's body belies the immensity of his soul. The child is the true philosopher, retaining as he does his glorious inheritance. He is "the eye among the blind." He is conscious of eternity and the eternal

[31] *Ode, Intimations of Immortality,* ll. 58–76.

mind. As philosopher and seer, he intuits those truths that men toil a lifetime to discover. Over him broods immortality. With him it is an ever-present fact. He is conscious, also, of preëxistence.

"Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

"O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;

Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore." [32]

This exalted view of childhood was characteristic of Wordsworth. He refers to it not merely in this immortal ode, but elsewhere. In *The Prelude* he says:

"Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements.
I guess not what this tells of Being past,
Nor what it augurs of the life to come"; [33]

Again, in *The Excursion,* he asks:

"Ah! why in age
Do we revert so fondly to the walks
Of childhood — but that there the Soul discerns

[32] *Ode, Intimations of Immortality,* ll. 108–167.
[33] *The Prelude,* Bk. V, ll. 507–511.

> The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired
> Of her own native vigour; thence can hear
> Reverberations; and a choral song,
> Commingling with the incense that ascends,
> Undaunted, toward the imperishable heavens,
> From her own lonely altar?" [34]

It has been suggested that Wordsworth in his views of preëxistence, the nearness to which state accounts for the remarkable powers of the child, is simply giving an expression to views borrowed from Plato. A Fenwick note reveals the fact that Wordsworth was acquainted with Plato's teaching on this subject. But this does not justify the statement that Wordsworth's belief was based merely on his acquaintance with Plato. The poet's conviction was undoubtedly rooted in his trance experience of boyhood. He confesses this in the prefatory note to the ode on Immortality already referred to. Others have thought that he might have been influenced by a seventeenth century poet, Henry Vaughan, whose "Silex Scintallans" and "The Retreate" show him to be a mystical poet, and a believer in preëxistence. Unless Wordsworth became acquainted with Vaughan's works through Coleridge, there is no external evidence to prove that he was familiar with these poems. There is, indeed, a similarity in their teachings. But such views are the common property of mystical poets. The true explanation of Wordsworth's belief is, that it was due to his mystical consciousness which was active in childhood and youth and which brought him in contact with not only a transfigured sense-world, but also with a world that transcended the limits of space and time — an eternal spiritual world — membership in which antedates birth, which is merely the soul's incarnation.

We find thus that an examination of Wordsworth's poetry and other sources of evidence shows that he was essentially a

[34] *The Excursion,* Bk. IX, ll. 36–44.

mystic. Professor James mentions four marks of mysticism, — ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity.[35] These marks were characteristic of Wordsworth's unique consciousness. His experiences were often ineffable. They were so wonderful that frequently he found it impossible to adequately express them. His spiritual visions and auditions, his rapturous feelings and intuitions, defy description and explanation. " How," he asks of Coleridge in *The Prelude,* " shall I seek the origin? where find faith in the marvelous things which then I felt? " What he saw was indescribable in terms of sense; it seemed like " a dream, a prospect in the mind." It was " with bliss ineffable " that he " felt the sentiment of Being spread o'er all things." In the clouds he " read unutterable love." The noetic quality was also present. His moods and trances were illuminating. There was spiritual vision, audition and intuition. He was immediately conscious of a transcendent world; of the Spirit of Nature; of the High God; of the spiritual nature of all Reality; of the relations of the Universal Presence, finite things and minds in a spiritual system; and of their ministry to his soul; also of preëxistence and immortality, and the dignity and worth of duty. Transiency, too, was a mark of the poet's supra-sensible experiences. Both the trance and lighter moods were comparatively short-lived. They were the fleeting, not the permanent forms of consciousness. Passivity constituted still another mark. The bodily frame, according to the Poet's own description, was inactive. Its powers were " laid asleep." The mind, too, was in a passive, receptive state. A " wise passiveness " seemed to pave the way for the approach of the Spirit of Nature and its communications or revelations. In all of this, the " marks " or " characters " of the mystic's consciousness are manifest.

[35] *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* New York and London, 1902, Lectures XVI and XVII.

These " blessed moods," with their illuminations and " ineffable bliss," made a profound impression on the mind of the poet, and deeply affected his life and work. He regarded them with reverence and gratitude, and they exercised a purifying and ennobling influence upon him. What he says in this respect of the Wanderer in *The Excursion* is descriptive of himself:

> " What wonder if his being thus became
> Sublime and comprehensive! Low desires,
> Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart
> Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
> Oft as he called those ecstasies to mind,
> And whence they flowed; and from them he acquired
> Wisdom, which works thro' patience; thence he learned
> In oft-recurring hours of sober thought
> To look on Nature with a humble heart,
> Self-questioned where it did not understand,
> And with a superstitious eye of love." [36]

His was a life of pure desires and lofty thoughts. He looked upon these unusual experiences as visitations from the Spirit of Nature, or from the High God. He interpreted them as ministrations to his spirit; and regarded himself as dedicated by a higher Power to the poet's life, to be the high priest of Nature and Man, " speaking no dream, but things oracular." For many years he practically abjured society, and lived in comparative solitude, giving himself up to his art, serving with clean hands and pure heart, with lofty aim and faithful effort, the Spirit that had made vows for him. The outcome is manifest in a large body of verse, the enduring portion of which owes its existence and immortality to the influence of his mysticism. Matthew Arnold says, " Wordsworth composed verses during a space of sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single de-

[36] *The Excursion,* Bk. I, ll. 233–243.

cade of these years, between 1799 and 1808, almost all of his really first-rate work was produced." [37] Principal Shaip and Professor Dowden, although differing from Arnold's estimate, agree that the decade referred to above represents "the springtime of his genius." During this period most of his poetry of insight into Nature was written. Occasional poems of Nature appear afterward, but few of them reveal "the gleam." A majority of them are descriptive in character. The reason for this is doubtless the fact that Wordsworth's mystical consciousness ceased to function after this period. He perceived it "die away, and fade into the common light of day." With the loss of this mystical apprehension of Nature, he turned to other subjects for poetic inspiration. One nature poem, composed in 1818, entitled "Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty," evinces that for a moment, as the poet remarks, the mystical apprehension was "by miracle restored." But here, also, Wordsworth is conscious of the loss of the "vision splendid":

> "Such hues from their celestial Urn
> Were wont to stream before mine eye,
> Where'er it wandered in the morn
> Of blissful infancy.
> This glimpse of glory, why renewed?
> Nay, rather speak with gratitude;
> For, if a vestige of those gleams
> Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.
> Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve
> No less than Nature's threatening voice,
> If aught unworthy be my choice,
> From THEE if I would swerve!
> Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light
> Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
> Which, at this moment, on my waking sight
> Appears to shine, by miracle restored;

[37] *Essays in Criticism,* Second Series, London, 1898, p. 136.

My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth!
—'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades;
And night approaches with her shades." [38]

With the loss of his mystical vision and intuition, Wordsworth was shorn of much of his poetic power.

[38] *Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty,* ll. 61–80.

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